

LADY HAMILTON
by E. Hallam Moorhouse

LADY HAMILTON



LADY HAMILTON AS "BACCHANTE"
By Sir Joshua Reynolds

HANFSTAENGL COLLECTION

LADY HAMILTON

BY E. HALLAM MOORHOUSE

AUTHOR OF "NELSON'S LADY HAMILTON"

T. N. FOULIS
London & Edinburgh
1912

Reprinted November 1912

Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh

THE LIST OF CONTENTS

I. THE "DIVINE LADY" OF ROMNEY . . .	Page 3
II. "THE TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER" . . .	15
III. EMMA HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY . . .	35
IV. BATTLE OF THE NILE, AND AFTER . . .	63
V. LORD NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON . . .	111

NELSON'S LAST LETTER TO LADY HAMILTON, WRITTEN ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR	132
--	-----

On the last page, in Lady Hamilton's handwriting, are the words—"This letter was found open in his Desk and brought to Lady Hamilton by Capt. Hardy.

"Oh, miserable, wretched Emma!
Oh, glorious and happy Nelson!"

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LADY HAMILTON AS "BACCHANTE" *Frontispiece*

By Sir Joshua Reynolds, after the original painting in the Cranbury Park Collection; reproduced by permission of Tankerville Chamberlayne, Esq., M.P.

LADY HAMILTON AS "MIRANDA" Page 4

Drawn on stone by J. W. Slater; painted by Romney

LADY HAMILTON AS "BACCHANTE" 8

By George Romney, after the original painting in the Cranbury Park Collection; reproduced by permission of Tankerville Chamberlayne, Esq., M.P.

LADY HAMILTON 12

"A BACCHANTE" 16

From picture in the Vernon Gallery. Painted by Romney; engraved by C. Holl

LADY HAMILTON (EMMA HART) 20

After Romney, by J. Skelton

LADY HAMILTON AS "NATURE" 24

After painting by Romney

EMMA, 1791 28

Drawing by Sir T. Lawrence, in British Museum

LADY HAMILTON 32

After F. Rehberg

LADY HAMILTON AS "SIBYL" 36

By Romney

LADY HAMILTON AS "SPINSTRESS". 40

After painting by Romney

LADY HAMILTON AS "DAPHNE" 44

By Romney

LADY HAMILTON AS "KATE" 48

By Romney

ILLUSTRATIONS

LADY HAMILTON AS A "SEAMSTRESS" .	56
<i>By Romney</i>	
EMMA, LADY HAMILTON AS "ST CECILIA" .	64
<i>By Romney</i>	
LADY HAMILTON AS "BACCHANTE" .	72
<i>By Le Brun, from the original painting in the Cranbury Park Collection; reproduced by permission of Tankerville Chamberlayne, Esq., M.P.</i>	
LADY HAMILTON AS "AMBASSADRESS" .	80
<i>Engraved by T. G. Appleton, after George Romney, from the picture in possession of Sir Robert Harvey, Bart., by permission of Messrs Henry Graves & Co., Ltd., 6 Pall Mall, London, owners of the copyright, and publishers of the engraving</i>	
SENSIBILITY	88
<i>Painted by G. Romney; engraved by R. Earlom</i>	
EMMA	96
<i>Painted by Romney; engraved in stipple by Jno. Jones</i>	
LADY HAMILTON EN SIBYLLE	104
<i>Painted by Mme. le Brun; engraved by Greveden</i>	
LADY HAMILTON AS A NUN PRAYING .	112
<i>By George Romney; reproduced by permission of Tankerville Chamberlayne, Esq., M.P.</i>	
QUAM VETERES GRAII PULCHRAM ESFINXERE THALIAM ESFACTA EST NOSTRO PULCHRIOR IN LATIO	120
HORATIA, NELSON'S DAUGHTER . . .	128
<i>By Lady Hamilton, miniature by Sir W. C. Ross, R.A.</i>	
NELSON'S LAST LETTER	132

CHAPTER FIRST THE
“DIVINE LADY” OF ROMNEY

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

CHAPTER FIRST THE

"DIVINE LADY" OF ROMNEY

EMMA HAMILTON IS ONE OF THE MOST PICTURESQUE feminine figures on the stage of history, by reason of her beauty, grace, and vitality, and because of the extraordinary nature of the events—events that shook the foundations of Europe—in which she took so conspicuous a part. And there is something more than mere picturesqueness about her—a warm heart, a real richness of nature mark her out for ever among greater, though colder, women. It is commonly considered that her warm heart was her undoing—but it was much more truly her making. Without that quality—which she had lavishly—even though with all her beauty, she never would have so captured Nelson's devotion, and therefore would not have existed in English history, as she now exists. Emma Hamilton, without Nelson, would endure to sight only, a vision on canvas, a painter's dream and inspiring model. It is because Nelson loved her that she is a woman to us—an impulsive, ill-regulated, almost human creature.

Eloquent as her features were, they were

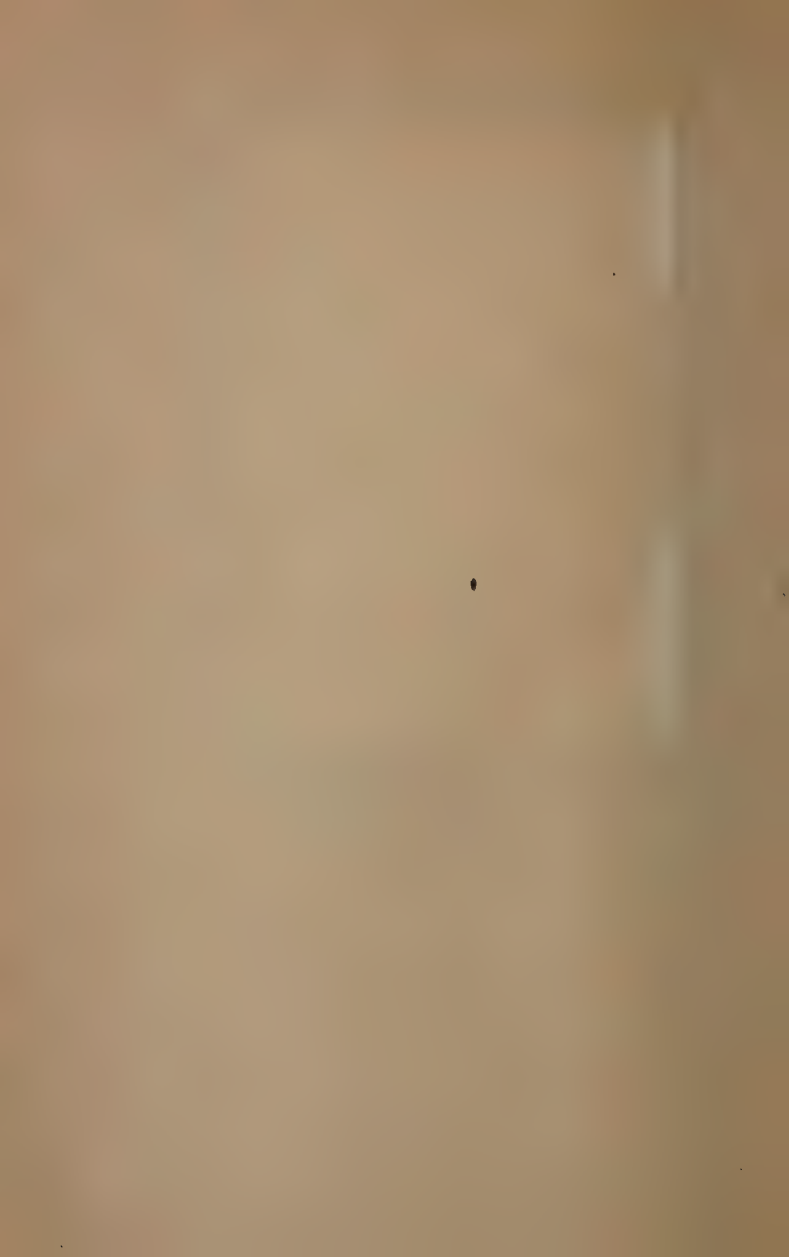
LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

but the expression of her eloquent heart. Her life was the struggle for expression, every sentiment and feeling at once burst forth in gladness or in rage, without the faintest regard to the restraints of convention. Owing to her birth and upbringing convention had no hold upon her, she did not so much ignore it as remain unconscious of its existence. Her natural exuberance was never checked—no wonder that on many occasions it overflowed the bounds and left people of refined taste in a state of amazement. In many respects Emma's temperament was more Elizabethan than belonging to the eighteenth century. But if she did not find her setting she had something approaching genius for making it—her adaptability, moulding at once herself and her surroundings, was extraordinary.

This adaptability was perhaps her greatest gift. Her life was a tissue of the most varied circumstance, a romance of improbabilities, and every happening she met with a supreme readiness, an amazing capacity for suiting herself to her environment. The one necessity for her was an audience, the bigger the better, though there were occasions when



LADY HAMILTON AS "MIRANDA"
Portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1766



“DIVINE LADY” OF ROMNEY

an audience of one sufficed, so long as that one was entirely wrapped in admiration. She delighted in receiving unexpected tribute to her beauty and powers: “I love,” she said, “to surprise people.” If that were so, she must have had much satisfaction, for throughout her career we see the heads of all her beholders turned after her in equal admiration and astonishment.

Her face befits her character. But its sheer beauty seems to partake of the nature of immortality, it lives so perpetually and so delightfully on canvas. Still we seem to see her dancing, posing, and smiling through the famous “Attitudes” so admired by her generation, rendering the Tragic or the Comic Muse with equal grace and rightness—a stormy, threatening Cassandra; a stately and alluring Circe; a pensive Ariadne; or delicious domestic Spinstress; a gay Bacchante in many forms, as if she were the sheer untrammelled spirit of Nature sprung wild from woods and fountains, her lips parted in the earliest laughter of the world. All these parts Emma could make her own—her face and form were a plastic mould into which she poured her in-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

terpretative genius, for indeed it was nothing less. No wonder Romney called her his "divine lady," for it may be doubted if such beauty and such expressiveness ever rejoiced a painter before. Hayley knew Emma well, and says in his "Life of Romney": "The talents which nature bestowed on the fair Emma led her to delight in the two kindred arts of music and painting; in the first she acquired great practical ability; for the second she had exquisite taste, and such expressive powers as could furnish to an historical painter an *inspiring* model for the various characters, either delicate or sublime. . . . Her features, like the language of Shakespeare, could exhibit all the gradations of every passion with a most fascinating touch of felicity of expression. Romney delighted in observing the wonderful command she possessed over her eloquent features."

Of her beauty we have record in words as well as on canvas. Charles Greville, while she was under his protection, remarked with the complacency of a connoisseur, that she was "about as perfect a thing as can be found in all Nature." But his uncle, Sir William Ham-

“DIVINE LADY” OF ROMNEY

ilton, went further than this—for in the eighteenth century the Man of Taste considered Art vastly superior to Nature—saying, “She is better than anything in Nature; in her particular way she is finer than anything that is to be found in antique Art!” The old Bishop of Derry, Sir William’s friend and schoolfellow, was so carried away that he remarked that the Creator was in a “glorious mood” when He made Emma. There was a Grecian symmetry about her form and features, but none of the coldness of “antique Art” in her colouring and temperament. Her hair was warm auburn, flowing abundantly to her heels; her mouth was considered a miracle³ of beauty, and her eyes were the kind of grey that changes according to lights and mood, for they have been variously described as violet and blue—the perfection of their shape can be seen in any one of Romney’s portraits. A radiant creature she was in her youth, full of the vigour and power of rebound of her peasant stock, but in some mysterious way there was grafted on to that a grace and ability—or adaptability—that sprang from some source unexplained. Add to her beauty,

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

rough upbringing, and ignorance of the world, that warm and overflowing heart of hers, that easy, half-pagan temper combined with her crude, ill-regulated ambitions, and some parts of her destiny require no gipsy's magic to foreknow. But though destiny and men so ill-used this simple country girl in her early years, that was by no means the end, as with so many others, but merely the beginning—the first painful steps into a wider world. She was richly endowed with vitality, with an enthusiasm for life. She faced her calamities with a kind of animal courage and something of the callousness of fatalism of the peasant. After the most shattering experiences she arose and looked optimistically towards the unmarred future. And once her ambitions were awake, once she had tasted the intoxication of taking part in great events, of having,

“A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling
scene!”

she felt that she had gained that for which she was born, for which she had struggled through many troubled years. She had found







LADY HAMILTON AS "BACCHANTL"

Reynolds, 1766

HANFSTA

“DIVINE LADY” OF ROMNEY

that she who was the penniless daughter of a
village blacksmith could be the Muse and the
inspirer of men whose names rang gloriously
in the world's loud mouth.





LADY HAMILTON

CHAPTER SECOND
THE TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER

CHAPTER SECOND

THE TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER

THE FIRST DEFINITE EXPRESSION OF HER personality, where we first catch the tone of her authentic and unmistakable voice, is in a distracted letter she wrote to the Honourable Charles Greville, second son of the Earl of Warwick. This letter needs some little explanation. She whom the world knows as Emma Hamilton was born Emily Lyon, and for a time after she went out into the world called herself Emily Hart. At about the age of fifteen she left the country and came to London as a domestic servant. She did not stay long in this first situation, but wandered about and fell into the dangers which beset a girl so young, so poor, so ignorant and lovely. The Prince Regent used to declare that he remembered seeing her selling fruit in the streets, with wooden pattens on her feet. Many stories are told of her life at this time, and many of them are untrue, for the career of an obscure little country maid astray in the town is not a matter of which history takes much heed. That she did go astray is undoubted, and is far less shame to her confiding warm heart than to the unscrupulous

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

men who misled her. It was at the house of one of these men, Sir Harry Fetherstonehaugh, a youngsquire of the typical eighteenth-century sporting type, that Charles Greville probably first saw her, and he must have extended the hand of a somewhat condescending kindness to her, for when Fetherstonehaugh, with singular brutality, turned her adrift without a guinea, and with a coming child, it was to Greville that she appealed in this pitiful, panic-stricken letter:—

“Yesterday did I receive your kind letter. It put me in some spirits, for, believe me, I am allmost distrackted. I have never hard from Sir H., and he is not at Lechster now. I am sure I have wrote 7 letters, and no anser. What shall I dow? Good God, what shall I dow? I can’t come to town for want of money. I have not a farthing to bless myself with, and I think my friends looks cooly on me. I think so. O, G., what shall I dow? What shall I dow? O how your letter affected me when you wished me happiness. O, G., that I was in your posesion or in Sir H., what a happy girl would I have been! Girl indeed! What else am I but a girl in distress—in reall



"A BACCHANTE"

*From picture in the Vernon Gallery. Painted by J. M. W. Turner,
engraved by C. Holl*

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

distress? For God's sake, G., write the minet you get this, and only tell me what I am to dow. Direct same whay. I am allmost mad. O, for God's sake, tell me what is to become of me. O, de Grevell, write to me. Write to me. G., adue, and believe yours for ever.

EMILY HART.”

The poignancy of that unlettered cry, “What shall I dow? Good God, what shall I dow?” still rings across the years, though it is probable that its pitifulness would be somewhat mitigated to the Honourable Charles Greville by its bad spelling, for he was a gentleman of cold affections, fastidious taste, and close attention to his own welfare. But it is easy to imagine he would appear a mirror of all perfection to the uncritical Emma, for he was cultivated, well-born, well-bred, and withal distinguished and attractive in appearance.

In answer to poor Emma's letter he wrote her a long epistle of advice, reproof, and worldly wisdom, which also contained the suggestion she was so evidently longing for, that she should come and live with him. But this offer was accompanied by warnings: he

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

had never, he said, "seen a woman clever enough to keep a man who was tired of her!" He tells her, in sentences which neatly reveal his own character, "If you do not forfeit my esteem perhaps my Emily may be happy. You know I have been so by avoiding the vexation which frequently arises from ingratitude and caprice. Nothing but your letter and your distress could incline me to alter my system, but remember I never will give up my place or continue my connexion one moment after my confidence is betray'd. . . . By degrees I would get you a new set of acquaintances, and by keeping your own secret, and no one about you having it in their power to betray you, I may expect to see you respected and admired."

It is hardly possible to imagine that Greville was much in love with Emma. Her warm and generous heart, her impulsive enthusiastic nature, would not have the appeal to him that they later had to Nelson. It was her extreme beauty that was the attraction to this connoisseur of the arts and made him willing to alter his "system" and admit her to his ordered existence. Also, as he was

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

something of a pedant, though he was only a few years over thirty at this time, he had probably realised that she had natural talents and was docile and teachable. Whatever his motives in offering her the shelter of his roof it is obvious that, though the arrangement cannot meet with a moralist's approval, it was the saving of Emma from a darker fate. And it was the making of her too, in many ways, for she really loved her somewhat pedantic protector with a passionate gratitude and constant wish to earn his approval. If she had been “giddy” and extravagant, as he reproved her, she trained herself while she lived with him in quiet ways and simplicity; she practised small economies, and made pathetic efforts to restrain the impetuous outbursts which were natural to her.

Greville settled her near Paddington Green, in the spring of 1782, in a quiet little house in Edgeware Row, and there Emma spent some of the simplest, happiest, and best years of her life. Pettigrew speaks, with a curious exaggeration, of the “splendid misery” of this time. But as all the evidence shows she was neither “splendid” nor “miser-
19

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

able"—on the contrary she was very happy in her quiet home, which was maintained on a strictly moderate sum, for Greville was by no means a rich man. Some of the household account books kept by Emma exist, and the sums put down are small and extremely domestic—apples, $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.; mangle, 5d.; cotton and needles, 9d.; coach, 1s.; poor man, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. She made excellent apple-pies and cultivated all the domestic virtues. After living with her three years Greville said, "she has avoided every appearance of giddiness, and prides herself on the neatness of her person and the good order of her house; these are habits both comfortable and convenient to me." Greville's "system" must surely at times have been a little trying to the ardent impulsive young creature, and there were occasionally small outbursts, quickly repented by her, for she was deeply attached to her somewhat cold mentor. Once when they were temporarily separated she wrote to him:—

"I have one happiness in view, which I am determined to practice, and that is evenness of temper and steadiness of mind. For endead I have thought so much of your amiable



LADY HAMILTON

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

goodness when you have been tried to the utmost, that I will, indeed I will manage myself, and try to be like Greville.”

She thought a great deal of a didactic poem of Hayley's called “The Triumphs of Temper,” and was constantly endeavouring, with her youth beating unquiet wings in her breast, to attain the placid heights of its heroine Serena. But at least at this period of her life she resembled Serena in one aspect for

“Free from ambitious pride and envious care
To love and to be loved was all her prayer.

The quietness of her life at this time is shown in the saying of one who knew her that “her only resources were reading and music at home, and sitting for pictures.” The “sitting for pictures” was a very important item, as during the four years from 1782 to 1786 Romney records nearly three hundred sittings given him by Emma, and the frequent shillings put down in her accounts for hackney coach were usually to convey her to the painter's studio in Cavendish Square. At this studio she met one or two people who interested and instructed her inquiring youth—

21

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

had she only had "a good eddecation," she cried when she was nineteen, "what a woman might she have been." To Romney himself she became much attached, as was her warm-hearted way when people were kind to her, and there was a kinship between them as they were both children of the people. Though they knew it not then, their names were to be inseparably linked—the woman whose beauty inspired the artist, and the artist who perpetuated that beauty for future generations to rejoice over. Long after these studio days Hayley wrote of Romney to Emma and said: "You were not only his *model* but his *inspirer*, and he truly and gratefully said that he owed a great part of his felicity as a painter to the *angelic kindness and intelligence* with which you used to animate his diffident and tremulous spirits to the grand efforts of art."

There is an interesting little sketch which Romney made of his studio at this time, which shows his incomparable model sitting for the picture of "The Spinstress" by her spinning-wheel. Greville is entering the room and smiling, and Hayley is seated at a

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

table—it gives a pleasant little peep into a long-vanished scene, but the fruit of the labour of that studio still survives.

These were quiet homely years—the last Emma was to know in her varied life—and she was daily improving in grace and accomplishments under Greville’s careful training. But the herald of change was near at hand, and in 1784 he arrived—quite unrecognised—in the person of Sir William Hamilton, Charles Greville’s uncle. He proved himself an agreeable addition to the amenities of the little household in Edgeware Row, and as the uncle of her “dear Greville” Emma was prepared to welcome him with affectionate fervour. At this time Sir William Hamilton was only fifty-four, a handsome, soldierly, distinguished man, British Ambassador at Naples, antiquary and connoisseur of the Arts, with tastes in complete sympathy with those of his cultured nephew. His attitude towards life is well shown in a letter he wrote to Emma some years later: “My study of antiquities has kept me in constant thought of the perpetual fluctuation of everything. The whole art is, really, to live all the *days* of our

23

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

life; and not, with an anxious care, disturb the sweetest hour that life affords—which is the present. Admire the Creator, and all His works to us incomprehensible, and do all the good you can upon earth ; and take the chance of eternity without dismay.”

Sir William’s admiration for Emma, “the fair tea-maker of Edgeware Row,” as he called her, was instant. Never, he thought, had his nephew’s taste been displayed to better advantage than in acquiring this delightful creature, this model of antique graces in a living form, to add to his collection of rare and beautiful objects. Emma might have been a statue from the way they talked of her, and there is something laughable in the picture of the two connoisseurs cataloguing her charms with as much precision as though she were a cameo or an Etruscan vase. But with all this there grew up on Emma’s side a friendly bantering attachment towards Greville’s kind and courtly uncle, who told her of the wonders of Italy, admired her voice, and said she ought to go to that sunny land of music and art to have it properly cultivated.



LADY L. M. ON S. O. J. 1877

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

The summer of this year when Emma first met her messenger of destiny in Sir William Hamilton, brought a preliminary break up—significant of change to come—in the Edgeware Row household. Emma was sent away to a watering-place for a change, while Greville and his uncle paid a round of visits at great houses in Scotland and elsewhere. The parting from her “ever-dear Greville” was painful to the affectionate Emma, and to beguile her temporary absence she wrote him immense, ill-spelt, exclamatory, delightful letters, which Greville, on his part, was somewhat slow to answer. “How tedious does the time pass awhay till I hear from you,” she exclaims in one of them. Further on in the same letter there is this characteristic outburst—and Emma’s letters are her very self: “I have done nothing but think of you since. And oh, Greville, did you but know, when I so think, what thoughts—what tender thoughts, you would say, ‘Good God ! and can Emma have such feeling sensibility? No, I never could think it. But now I may hope to bring her to conviction, and she may prove a valluable and amiable whoman!’

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

True, Greville, and you shall not be disappointed. I will be everything you can wish. But mind you, Greville, your own great goodness has brought this about. You don't know what I am become. Would you think it, Greville? Emma—the wild, unthinking Emma, is a grave, thoughtful phylosopher.”

She herself was evidently considerably impressed with that remarkable discovery which she thought would be so welcome to Greville—but she never became the “grave, thoughtful phylosopher” to the end of her days. Not all the vicissitudes of her life, neither love, glory, nor trouble, ever made her essentially different from the “wild, unthinking Emma” of her youth. As has been said she was marvellously adaptable and expressive of her surroundings, but at heart she was always the same creature. The accomplishments and experiences she added to the ignorance of her untutored days remained upon the surface, they never really penetrated to the fibre of her being, and the faults and virtues with which she was born she carried unaltered to the grave.

At the end of the summer Emma returned

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

to Edgeware Road, joyous in the thought of meeting Greville again, though aware from his “kind instructing letter” that he meant to re-arrange things somewhat. Little she thought the extent of his rearrangements would end in handing her over to another man. But this was what Greville had in his mind. Two of his interests would be served by the transference of Emma to Sir William Hamilton—he did not wish his uncle to marry, as he was his heir, and he himself wished to be able to do so, if he could find an heiress to improve his narrow fortune. “If you did not choose a wife,” he wrote to his uncle, who had returned to Italy, “I wish the tea-maker of Edgeware Row was yours, if I could without banishing myself from a visit to Naples. I do not know how to part with what I am not tired with; I do not know how to go on, and I give her every merit of prudence and moderation and affection.”

Greville knew that the principal obstacle in the way of these convenient arrangements would be Emma herself—she was entirely devoted to him, and while living with him had refused two offers of marriage and at

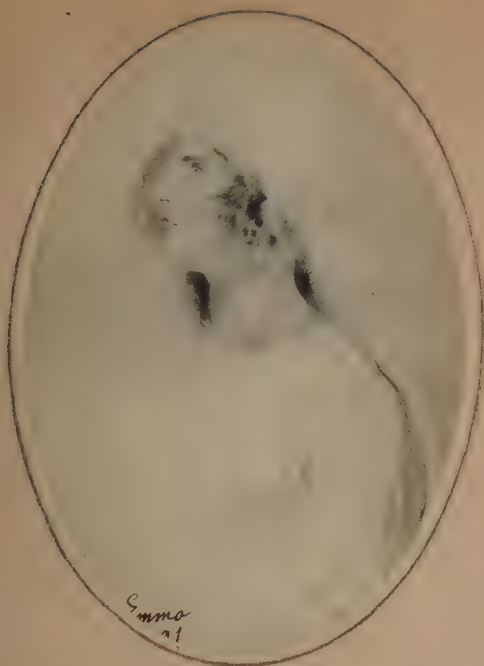
LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

least one offer of a similar position from a much richer man than Greville, who had tried to lure her with diamonds, horses, and all the luxuries. If she was to be induced to go out to Naples and Sir William Hamilton it could only be under a misapprehension, both as to the object and duration of her visit. There were many plots and arrangements between uncle and nephew, both of them quite sensible that their plans were of a nature to cause passionate resentment and grief in Emma's heart, had she known. But at last things were arranged as they wished, and Emma was tricked into believing that she was only to go to Naples for a few months, that it was impossible for Greville to go with her, as he must stay behind in England to arrange his financial affairs and would then come out to fetch her home. Meanwhile she was to make the best of her opportunities in training her fine voice, and become still more dowered with gifts and graces so that her Greville might love her more.

So Emma, still trusting the man who had betrayed her, turned her face towards Naples and that Italy where she was to meet Nelson.



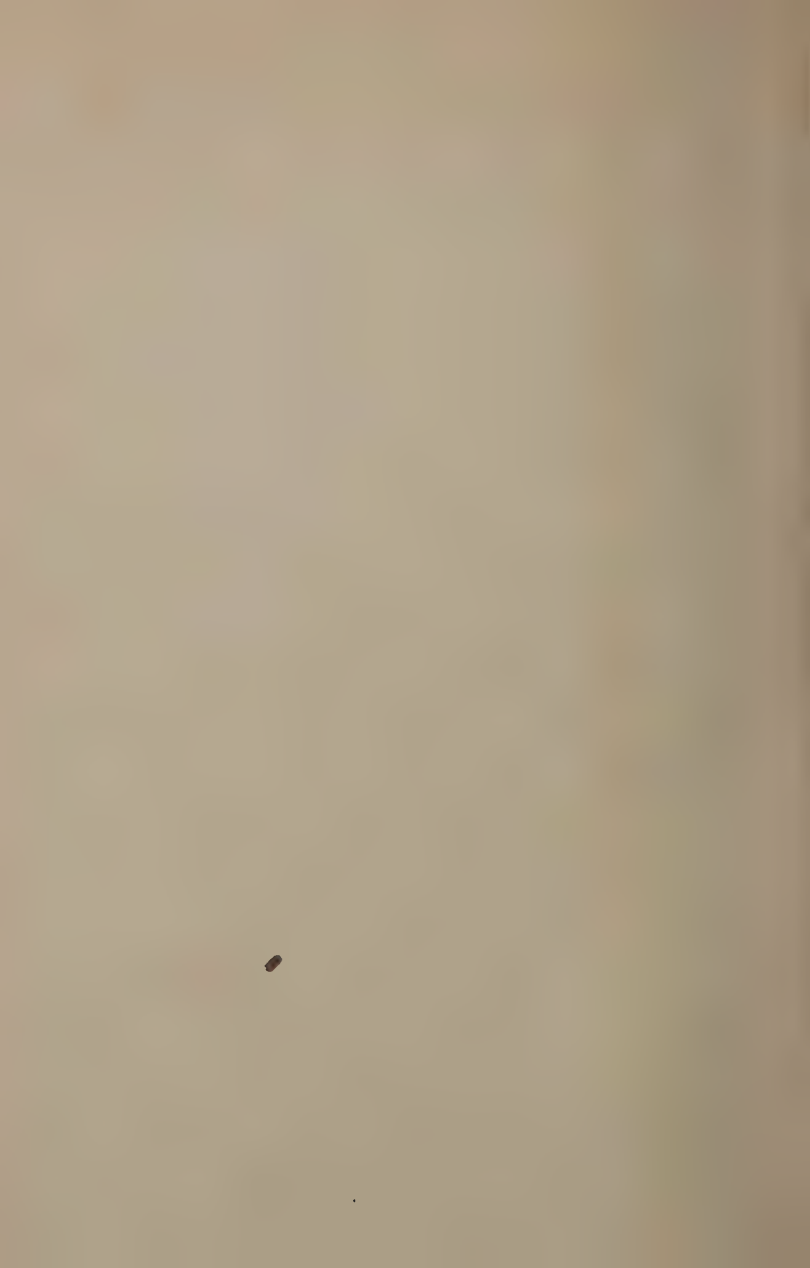




EMMA, 1791
Drawing by Sir T. Lawrence, in British Museum

“TRIUMPHS OF TEMPER”

She was nearing the point where the obscure but not untroubled stream of her own life was to merge in the flood of historic and unforgettable events.





LADY HAMILTON

After F. Reihberg

CHAPTER THIRD EMMA
HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

CHAPTER THIRD EMMA HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

IN 1786 THE PALAZZO SESSA WAS THE BRITISH Embassy at Naples. There Sir William Hamilton had arranged for Emma and her mother, who went by the name of Mrs Cadogan and accompanied her on this expedition, a beautiful apartment of four rooms. Emma's room, said one who saw it, was "furnished in the English taste," and was "most delightful," the "outlook from its corner window, unique." From that window Emma could look out on the wonderful Bay of Naples, on Capri and Posilippo, could follow the curving coast-line from Sorrento to Cape Minerva, and all bathed in radiant air and a sun-light she had never seen. What a contrast to Paddington Green! Sir William had received her with the greatest attention and kindness, had piled upon her just the gifts most calculated to please her feminine fondness for finery—a "camlet shawl," a "beautiful gown, cost 25 guineas (India painting on wite sattin)," and "muslin dresses loose to tye with a sash for the hot weather—made like the turkey dresses, the sleeves tyed in fowlds with ribbon and trimmed with lace."

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

But in spite of these things and this kindness (partly because of it) Emma was sitting in her beautiful room, miserable, angry, and choked with fears, writing to the distant Greville:—

“I will not venture myself now to wright any more, for my heart and mind are torn by different passions, that I shall go mad. Only, Greville, remember your promise of October. Sir William says you never mentioned to him about coming to Naples at all. But you know the consequence of your not coming for me. Indead, my dear Greville, I live but in the hope of seeing you, and if you do not come hear, lett whatt will be the consequence, I will come to England, I have had a conversation this morning with Sir William, that has made me mad. He speaks—no, I do not know what to make of it. But, Greville, my dear Greville, wright some comfort to me. . . . Pray, for God’s sake, wright to me and come to me, for Sir William shall not be anything to me but your friend.”

This appeal was received in silence. She wrote to him time and again passionate, frightened letters, but weeks passed and no



LADY HAMILTON AS "SIBYL."

V. NO. 1.

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

answer came. Once he had answered her terrified appeal, "O Greville, what shall I do?" but now he kept a stubborn cold silence against which Emma hurled herself in vain. Possibly he meant to let the lesson of her situation, far away in Naples under Sir William Hamilton's somewhat doubtful protection, sink in before he issued his final commands; possibly even his self-sufficient and self-satisfied nature shrank from dealing the final blow to her trust in him. However, it came at last—she would best please him and consult her own interests by "obliging" his uncle; he was never coming to take her home. Emma's righteous rage broke forth on receiving this miserable letter. "If I was with you," she cried, "I wou'd murder you and myself booth." She longs for some fierce outlet for her injured love: "I will go to London, their go into every excess of vice till I dye, a miserable, broken-hearted wretch, and leave my fate as a warning to young whomen never to be two good; for now you have made me love you, you made me good, you have abandoned me; and some violent end shall finish our connection, if it is to finish." But

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

pleading, rage, pathos, were all in vain—she had forgotten that cool little saying of Greville's uttered to her at the very beginning of their connection, "I have never seen a woman clever enough to keep a man who was tired of her." How Greville's conduct appeared to himself is shown in a letter he wrote Sir William Hamilton some months after his abandonment of Emma:—

"I so long foresaw that a moment of separation must arrive, that I never kept the connection, but on a footing of perfect liberty to her. Its commencement was not of my seeking and hitherto it has contributed to her happiness. She knows and reflects often on the circumstances which she cannot forget, and in her heart she cannot reproach me of having acted otherwise than a kind and attentive friend. But you have now rendered it possible for her to be respected and comfortable, and if she has not talked herself out of the true view of her situation she will retain the protection and affection of us both. . . . I had always proposed to continue her friend although the connexion ceased."

The most curious thing in this curious dra-

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

ma of character and temperament is that after Emma had recovered from her rage and wounded love, after she had become not only resigned to, but delighted with her life in Naples, she adopted Greville as a friend just as he proposed. She wrote to him constantly, giving him all the news of the great years that were to come and her own thrilling part in them; she demanded that he should attend to her wishes and send her Dunstable hats and gloves and ribbons from London. By an odd freak of destiny her marriage with Sir William Hamilton placed her in the position of being Greville's aunt. But though she thus adjusted herself to new conditions with apparent quickness, there is no doubt that Greville's cruelly callous treatment injured her heart in a way that the brutality of other men had never done. Greville she had loved with all that was best and most unselfish in her—ambition, and the love of power and prominence which tainted her love for Nelson had no part in her young feeling for Greville. It was pure love, giving all, asking nothing, not even love in exchange, only a little kindness. She never felt this towards Sir

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

William Hamilton, never thus towards Nelson. Something innocent and trusting in her was broken and the fibre of her nature coarsened from that time onwards.

Emma's mobile temperament was fitted to many rôles, but the part of love-forlorn, heart-broken heroine could not suit her long. Her vitality was too great for the necessary spiritlessness, the claim of the joy of life too strong to be resisted. Imagine, too, the circumstances of her new setting, the glowing colour, the gaiety, the strange beauty of a Southern scene to this daughter of Flintshire and Paddington Green, the riches of apparel lavished upon her, the vehemently expressed admiration that followed her, the affectionate consideration of Sir William Hamilton after the "kind instructing" lectures of Charles Greville. No wonder she was intoxicated, no wonder she recovered from her slighted love and determined to enjoy the good she had with all the ardour that was natural to her. Naples at that time was a paradise which might have been specially designed to enhance her charms and delight her senses. The revolutions, bloodshed, and distresses to



LADY HAMILTON AS A "SPINSTRESS"

After painting by Romney

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

follow were yet dim upon the horizon of the future; the fortresses of Uovo and Nuovo held as yet no threat.

The chronicles of the time are full of Emma's graces, and a distinguished visitor to Naples, Goethe himself, has much to say on the subject. He writes a detailed description of the famous "Attitudes" in which Emma displayed dissolving shapes of beauty to the delighted gaze of her admirers:—

"The Chevalier Hamilton, so long resident here as English Ambassador, so long, too, connoisseur and student of Art and Nature, has found their counterpart and acme with exquisite delight in a lovely girl—English, and some twenty years of age. She is exceedingly beautiful and finely built. She wears a Greek garb becoming her to perfection, she then merely loosens her locks, takes a pair of shawls, and effects changes of postures, moods, gestures, mien and appearance that makes one really feel as if one were in some dream. Here is visible complete, and bodied forth in movements of surprising variety all that so many artists have sought in vain to fix and render. Successively stand-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

ing, kneeling, seated, reclining, grave, sad, sportive, teasing, abandoned, penitent, alluring, threatening, agonised. One follows the other, and grows out of it. She knows how to choose and shift the simple folds of her single kerchief for every expression, and to adjust it into a hundred kinds of head-gear. Her elderly knight holds the torches for her performance, and is absorbed in his soul's desire. In her he finds the charm of all antiques, the fair profile of Sicilian coins, the Apollo Belvedere himself. . . . We have already rejoiced in the spectacle two evenings."

It heightens the impression to set later descriptions of the "Attitudes" side by side with Goethe's. Sir Gilbert Elliot was by no means one of her admirers, but he wrote of these performances: "We had the 'Attitudes' a night or two ago by candle light. They come up to my expectations fully, which is saying everything. They set Lady Hamilton in a very different light from any I had seen her in before; nothing about her, neither her conversation, her manners, nor figure, announce the very refined taste which she dis-

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

covers in this performance, besides the extraordinary talent which is needed for the execution."

Five years earlier than this, in the year of Emma's marriage, Lady Malmesbury said: "You never saw anything so charming as Lady Hamilton's 'Attitudes.' The most graceful statues or pictures do not give you an idea of them." Madame Le Brun saw them in 1803, and declared, "she changed from grief to joy, and from joy to terror, so rapidly and effectively that we were all enchanted." When somebody on one of these later occasions compared her to Mrs Siddons Nelson was much annoyed and walked up and down a crowded room muttering, "D—— Mrs Siddons!" Finally there is the description of the very critical Mrs St George:—

"Breakfasted with Lady Hamilton, and saw her represent in succession the best statues and paintings extant. She assumes their attitude, expression, and drapery with great facility, swiftness, and accuracy. Several Indian shawls, a chair, some antique vases, a wreath of roses, a tambourine, and a few children are her whole apparatus. She stands

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

at one end of the room, with a strong light to her left, and every other window closed. Her hair is short, dressed like an antique, and her gown a simple calico chemise, very easy, with loose sleeves to the wrist, she disposes the shawls so as to form Grecian, Turkish, and other drapery, as well as a variety of turbans. Her arrangement of the turbans is absolute sleight-of-hand; she does it so quickly, so easily, and so well. It is a beautiful performance, amusing to the most ignorant, and highly interesting to the lovers of art. The chief of her imitations are from the antique. Each representation lasts about ten minutes."

Rehberg did a series of delicate outline drawings of these "Attitudes"—or, rather, of some of them—and the drawings give a very fair idea of her classical grace of line, but of course the colour, the mobility of movement falling into new forms of grace, are inevitably absent.

There are many pictures of these Italian days which survive to us in all their gaiety in Emma's own exclamatory letters, in the admiring comments of Sir William Hamil-



LADY HAMILTON AND CHILD

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

ton and others. Sir William must not only have Emma herself, but also numberless pictures of her. "The house is full of painters painting me," she says in one of her early Naples letters. "He has now got nine pictures of me, and 2 a painting. Marchant is cutting my head in stone, that is in camea for a ring. There is another man modeling me in wax, and another in clay. All the artists is come from Rome to study from me, that Sir William as fitted up a room, that is calld the painting-room. Sir William is never a moment from me."

Besides these perpetual sittings—which her vanity and her vitality alike made it possible for her to enjoy—Emma had masters of all sorts to teach her singing, drawing, and Italian. It was Sir William's wish that she should become a very miracle of accomplishments, as of beauty. She certainly did not lack the praise which encourages: Sir William, she says, "takes delight in all I do." Apparently the musicians, as well as the painters, went wild about her. In a deliciously funny letter, ecstatic in its simple vanity, she says :—

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

“Galucci played solo some of my solfegos and you whold have thought he would have gone mad. He says he had heard a great deal of me. But he never saw or heard of such a whoman before. He says when he first came in, I frightened him with a Majesty and Juno look that I received him with. Then he says that whent of on being more acquainted, and I enchanted him by my politeness and the manner in which I did the honors, and then I made him allmost cry with Handels; and with the comick he could not contain himself for he says he never saw the tragick and comick muse blended so happily together.”

The heavy King of Naples was among her admirers—as Emma expressed it, he “as eyes, he as a heart, and I have made an impression on it.” But she was as proud of her prudence as of her beauty and quaintly writes, “We keep the good-will of the other party mentioned abbove [the Queen] and never give him any encouragement.” There is a tale that on one occasion her high spirits got the better of her vaunted prudence and she played a prank upon the stupid King, getting him to put his devotion in writing

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

and then presented the document to the Queen. But the truth of this story is somewhat doubtful. Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples and sister of Marie Antoinette of France, could not receive Emma at Court owing to her unregularised position in the British Ambassador's house, but she admired her loveliness and showed her "every distant civility."

Festivities and endless admiration, that seemed to bring her no surfeit, were the order of Emma's day. On one occasion she was the guest of honour on board a Dutch man-of-war. This is her picture of herself: "We sett down thirty to dine—me at the head of the table, mistress of the feast, drest all in virgin white and my hair all in ringlets, reaching allmost to my heals. I assure you it is so long, that I realy look'd and moved amongst it. Sir William said so."

After the dinner on board there was a gala night at the Opera. Emma of course was there: "I had the finest dress made up on purpose, as I had a box near the King and Queen. My gown was purple sattin, wite sattin peticoat trimd with crape and spangles.

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

My cap lovely, from Paris, all white feathers."

On one occasion she was highly pleased with the praise of a prince who told her that she was (the spelling is hers, not the prince's!) "a dymond of the first watter, and the finest creature on the hearth." But it was not only princes and ambassadors who praised her, servants, peasants, priests and nuns all joined in the chorus, till it almost seems as though the whole population of Naples had no other occupation than admiring her. A Neapolitan maid of her own once asked her, "Does not God favour you more than us?" On being told that he didn't, the contadina exclaimed reproachfully, "O God, your excellenza is very ungrateful! He has been so good as to make your face the same as He made the face of the Blessed Virgin, and you don't esteem it a favour." When a priest came to their house Sir William bade his Madonna-Emma put a shawl over her head and look up, whereupon the priest burst into tears and said, "God had sent her on purpose."

Emma went to the Convent of Santa Romyta for some of her accomplishments and



THE WOMAN OF THE LAMP



HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

there met a nun whom she much admired. The letter in which she tells Sir William about her is so pretty in its frank worldliness that it must be quoted almost in full:—

“I am quite charmed with Beatrice Acquaviva. Such is the name of the charming whoman I saw to-day. Oh, Sir William, she is a pretty whoman. She is 29 years old. She took the veil at twenty; and does not repent to this day, though if I am a judge in physiognomy, her eyes does not look like the eyes of a nun. They are allways laughing, and something in them vastly alluring, and I wonder the men of Naples wou’d suffer the oneley pretty whoman who is realy pretty to be shut in a convent. But it is like the mean-spirited ill taste of the Neapolitans. I told her I wondered how she wou’d be lett to hide herself from the world, and I daresay thousands of tears was shed the day she deprived Naples of one of its greatest ornaments. She answered with a sigh, that endead numbers of tears was shed, and once or twice her resolution was allmost shook, but a pleasing comfort she felt at regaining her friends that she had been brought up with, and religious

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

considerations strengthened her mind, and she parted with the world with pleasure. And since that time one of her sisters had followed her example, and another—which I saw—was prepared to enter soon. But neither of her sisters is so beautiful as her, tho' the[y] are booth very agreeable. But I think Beatrice is charming, and I realy feil for her an affection. Her eyes, Sir William, is I don't know how to describe them. I stopt one hour with them; and I had all the good things to eat, and I promise you they don't starve themselves. But there dress is very becoming, and she told me that she was allowed to wear rings and mufs and any little thing she liked, and endead she display'd to-day a good deal of finery, for she had 4 or 5 dimond rings on her fingers, and seemed fond of her muff. She has excellent teeth, and shows them, for she is allways laughing. She kissed my lips, cheeks, and forehead, and every moment exclaimed: 'Charming, fine creature,' admired my dress, said I looked like an angel, for I was in clear white dimity and a blue sash. . . . She said she had heard I was good to the poor, generous, & noble-minded.

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

'Now,' she says, 'it wou'd be worth wile to live for such a one as you. Your good heart wou'd melt at any trouble that befel me, and partake of one's greef or be equally happy at one's good fortune. But I never met with a friend yet, or I ever saw a person I cou'd love till now, and you shall have proofs of my love.' In short I sat and listened to her, and the tears stood in my eyes, I don't know why, but I loved her at that moment. . . . 'Oh, Emma,' she says to me . . . 'We may read your heart in your countenance, your complexion; in short, your figure and features is rare, for you are like the marble statues I saw when I was in the world.' I think she flattered me up, but I was pleased."

And what of Sir William himself during this time? He had progressed rapidly in her affections—Greville had faded to a distant "friend" and his uncle become the kindly sun of her sphere. Emma's letters to Sir William during any temporary separation breathe the same impulsive warmth as her earlier letters to Greville, her later ones to Nelson. There is no doubt she loved easily, she was by nature impulsive and responsive. But a

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

little remark of hers to Nelson in 1798 shows that, like many other people, she cherished an idea of herself that had no foundation in fact. It raises a half-smile to find her telling the Admiral, in all good faith, "I am no one's enemy, and unfortunately am difficult and cannot make friendships with all." "Difficult" surely Emma never was—her whole record proves her easy in friendship, easy in love, easy with money, both in giving and spending. All her life she scattered with both hands all she had—a very spendthrift of the emotions. Hear the expressions she lavished upon her elderly Ambassador: "Do you call me your dear friend? Oh, what a happy creature is your Emma!—me that had no friend, no protector, no body that I could trust, and now to be the friend, the Emma of Sir William Hamilton!" She declares "one hour's absence is a year," and says with a bewildering mixture of ideas, that to her he is, "my friend, my All, my earthly Good, my Kind home in one, you are to me eating, drinking and cloathing, my comforter in distress. Then why shall I not love you? Endead I must and ought, whilst life is left in me, or

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

reason to think on you." Later she wrote, "I confess . . . I doat on him. Nor I never can love any other person but him"—a dangerous prophecy for a woman of Emma's temperament. But the shadow of another man, as lovable as he was great, had not then touched her glowing girl's horizon. Sir William was supreme, the spectacle of their devotion was commented on by a friend of Greville's with some concern:—

"Her influence over him exceeds all belief. . . . The language of both parties, who always spoke in the plural number—we, us, and ours—stagger'd me at first, but soon made me determined to speak openly to him on the subject, when he assur'd me, what I confess I was most happy to hear, that he was not married; but flung out some hints of doing justice to her good behaviour."

Five years before, in one of her enraged and stricken letters to the deserting Greville, Emma had threatened, "I will make him [Sir William] marry me." But during those five years she had not attained her wish, though Sir William, who was willing to lavish everything upon her save the small wedding-ring,

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

was not unconscious of her very natural ambition. "I fear," he wrote, "that her views are beyond what I can bring myself to execute, and that when her hopes on this point are over she will make herself and me unhappy."

Greville and all the worldly-wise were ranged against her, but in 1789 Emma received an unexpected and socially powerful ally in the charming Elizabeth Gunning, Duchess of Argyll, who came to Naples for her health. By her first marriage the beautiful Duchess was related to Sir William Hamilton, and as she conceived a great liking for Emma it made less great and less generous ladies draw in their supercilious horns. She regarded Emma's ambiguous position as no bar to friendship and urged Sir William to do the honourable thing. No doubt but that her personal charm and social influence were a great help in making Emma Hart unto Lady Hamilton; no wonder that Emma wrote after the Duchess's death in the year following, "I never had such a friend as her, and that you will know, when I see you and recount to you all the acts of kindness she

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

shew'd to me ; for they were too good and numerous to describe in a letter. Think then to a heart of sensibility and gratitude, what it must suffer."

By the summer of 1791 events were turning in the direction of Emma's wishes—she and Sir William were to come to London and be married there. In a letter informing Greville of the coming visit, but not of the coming marriage, Emma said that all her ambition is to make Sir William happy, "And you will see he is so—" the little triumph of that sentence must surely have been sweet. "You can't think," she goes on, "2 people that has lived five years with all the domestick happiness that's possible can separate, and those 2 persons, that knows no other comfort but in each other's company, which is the case I assure you with ous."

When Sir William Hamilton and his Emma returned to London there was much excitement and curiosity about them both and many meetings with old friends under new conditions—of the meeting with Greville there is unfortunately no record. Romney was enchanted to behold his "divine lady"

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

again, and, even amid the pressure of her affairs, she gave him many sittings. Hayley, too, that friend of the Cavendish Square studio days, Emma affectionately remembered, and after her marriage and return to Naples wrote characteristically to Romney:—

“Tell Hayley I am allways reading his ‘Triumphs of Temper,’ it was that made me Lady H., for God knows I had for 5 years enough to try my temper, and I am affraid if it had not been for the good example Serena taught me, my girdle wou’d have burst, and if it had I had been undone; for Sir W. minds more temper than beauty.”

Emma’s career in town before her marriage was something of a triumph. Everyone ran after her and admired her. “Gallini,” says Romney, “offered her two thousand pounds a year, and two benefits, if she would engage with him, on which Sir William said pleasantly that he had engaged her for life.”

The marriage which made the nameless daughter of the people into Lady Hamilton, wife of the British Ambassador at Naples, took place at Marylebone Church on the 6th



LADY HAMILTON AS A "SEAMSTRESS"

1766

HAMILTON'S STAY IN ITALY

of September, 1791. It meant much to Emma, this marriage, in spite of the triumphant way in which she had faced her world without it, as is shown in a touching letter to Romney:—"I am the happiest woman in the world. Sir William is fonder of me every day, and I hope he will have no cause to repent of what he has done; for I feel so gratefull to him that I think I shall never be able to make him amends for his goodness to me. But why do I tell you this? You know me enough. You was the first dear friend I opened my heart to. You ought to know me, for you have seen and discoursed with me in my poorer days. . . . How gratefull then do I feel to my dear, dear husband, that as restored peace to my mind, that as given me honors, rank, and what is more, innocence and happiness. Rejoice with me, my dear Sir, my friend, my more than father. Believe me, I am still that same Emma you knew me."

Little did Horace Walpole know of the warm heart that lay beneath the "Attitudes" when he heard the news of the British Ambassador's somewhat surprising marriage

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

—"So Sir William has married his gallery of statues!" was his characteristic comment.

So we behold Emma returning to Naples triumphantly on the arm of her distinguished husband—on her very wedding-day she gave Romney a sitting for his picture of her as "The Ambassadors"—and in her own opinion, at least, the equal of those she described as "Ladys Malmsbury, Malden, Plymouth Carnegee, Wright, &c." They were all very kind and attentive to her on her return—"you know what prudes our Ladys are," she remarks, with a sudden glimpse of the street *gamin* that always underlay her graces. The Queen of Naples was no longer "distantly civil," but took her into a friendship that was very intoxicating to the impressionable

Emma and destined to have remarkable consequences.

CHAPTER FOURTH BATTLE OF THE NILE — AND AFTER

CHAPTER FOURTH BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

THE STAGE IS SET FOR A LARGER SCENE—

Emma no longer discourses on compliments, “bluehats,” and parties. The French Revolution, the tragic deaths of Louis XVI, and Marie Antoinette—who was sister to Queen Maria Carolina of Naples—have rolled a dark cloud of portent across her frivolities. But even so we still picture Emma a little as a child standing at a window watching the blinding streaks of lightning and listening to the loud thunder-claps, shuddering, excited, and all the while delighted to be in the midst of such a magnificent tempest. She became a woman of affairs, the close friend of the capable daughter of Maria Teresa, the counsellor of England’s greatest Admiral, she took herself and her parts in these historic matters with overwhelming seriousness—but through all there remains that incurable, delightful, ridiculous touch of the child, which makes her so often both lovable and absurd.

Her admiration for the Queen of Naples became at once extreme and was expressed with all her usual ardour of freedom. After two years’ intimacy she wrote:—

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

"No person can be so charming as the Queen, she is everything one can wish—the best mother, wife, and friend in the world. I live constantly with her, and have done intimately so for two years, and I never have all that time seen anything but goodness and sincerity in her, and, if ever you hear any lies about her, contradict them, and if you should see a cursed book written by a vile french dog with her character in it, don't believe one word."

But Maria Carolina was a far more subtle and deep-scheming woman than Emma realised—she did not offer friendship to the wife of the British Ambassador for the simple sake of her *beaux yeux* or warm heart, Emma was the tool of her ambitions and her fears. After the outbreak of the French Revolution which slew her sister and shook all the big and little thrones of Europe, the Queen of Naples turned to England as the only refuge and help in that time of chaos and terror—everything English was good, everything French an abomination. She told Emma that she relied on her "generous nation" to accomplish the vengeance for which the blood





EMMA, LADY HAMILTON AS

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

of her sister cried out. And finally, though lonely and unsupported, Pitt held out against the popular clamour, England plunged into the Great War—that prolonged struggle with Napoleon which only ended many years later at Waterloo.

It was a dramatic and fateful moment—the opening of the War—when Captain Horatio Nelson, in that famous sixty-four-gun ship the *Agamemnon*, sailed into the Bay of Naples bearing the tidings of the surrender of Toulon. He was received by the ardent Maria Carolina with rapture as the “Saviour of Italy.” He and Emma Hamilton met for the first time—little guessing either of them how fatefully they were to affect each other’s lives. Nelson’s comment on Lady Hamilton to his wife after the meeting is quite detached and indifferent, “she is a young woman of amiable manners, and who does honour to the station to which she is raised.” Sir William Hamilton appears to have been more impressed by Nelson’s qualities after this first meeting than Emma, for he told her, “The Captain I am about to introduce to you is a little man and far from hand-

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

some, but he will live to be a great man. I know it from the talk I have had with him."

At this time Nelson was close upon thirty-five years old. In appearance he was not the familiar Nelson of the portraits, with one arm, and worn face drawn into deep lines by the quick workings of that spirit which suffered and dared so much. When Emma first saw him Nelson bore none of his honourable battle-scars, he still had the use of his right arm and eye, he still wore his hair tossed back from his brow in his early manner, for it was only after he was wounded in the forehead at the Nile that he brought down his hair to hide the scar. A picture of him painted by Rigaud when he was a young captain of twenty-two gives a closer idea of him at this time, probably, than any of the later portraits. He was slender, erect, with level-set eyes and sensitive mouth—Sir William might call him "far from handsome," and some of the portraits emphasise that point to the verge of ugliness, but in his expression and bearing was something far finer and more rare. The shock with which we try to imagine Nelson "handsome" in the conven-

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

tional sense shows how unusual and alone is that familiar face.

“Admiral Nelson,” as General and Prime Minister Acton called him prematurely on this visit, wishing to make some return for the hospitality he had received, invited the King and Queen, Sir William Hamilton, his ‘amiable!’ wife, and the Neapolitan Ministers to a luncheon party on board the *Agamemnon*. But when the day arrived there came also an express for Nelson with the news that a French man-of-war and three sail under convoy had anchored off Sardinia. The decorations were instantly stripped from the *Agamemnon*. “Unfit as my ship was,” wrote Nelson, “I had nothing left for the honour of our country but to sail, which I did in two hours afterwards. It was necessary to show them what an English man-of-war would do.”

And so in his famous ship Nelson went stretching down the coast, leaving Emma, leaving Naples, without a backward thought—to return no more for five momentous years.

For Emma, too, these years were filled to the brim. Her friendship with her “adored Queen” occupied most of her thoughts. Each

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

day brought some fresh excitement and agitation, and Emma was in the thick of it all, for as she had earlier told Greville, she had "got into politicks." She was exercising her dawning powers as a woman of affairs in the Italy that was shaking to the tread of Napoleon, that Alexander new upsprung to conquer the world. The Italian campaign, the Jacobin excitement at Naples, the withdrawal of the English fleet from the Mediterranean—"I lament our present orders in sackcloth and ashes, so dishonourable to the dignity of England whose fleets are equal to meet the world in arms," wrote Nelson—the attempted French invasion of Ireland, the dearly-needed victory off Cape St Vincent, when Nelson's name first rang out in its true authentic note—these were the things that comprised Emma's daily budget of news. As has been said she was in the very thick of it, for the Austrian Queen of Naples, who was playing a political game very different from that of her slow Bourbon husband, used Lady Hamilton as a means of communication between herself and the British Ambassador and British Government. In one of

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

her little notes to Emma she says: "I send you a letter in cypher, come from Spain, from Galatone, which must be returned before twenty-four hours, in order that the King may find it again. There [are] some facts very interesting for the English Government, which I wish to communicate to them, to shew my attachment to them."

This was not the only document abstracted from the King of Naples by the Queen and Emma. In her Memorial to George III., many years later, Lady Hamilton claimed, "That it was the good fortune of your Majesty's memorialist, among many inferior services, to acquire the confidential friendship of that great and august Princess, the Queen of Naples, your Majesty's most faithful and ardently attached ally at a period of peculiar peril, and when her august Consort . . . was unhappily constrained to confess a neutrality, but little in accordance with the feelings of his own excellent heart. By which means your Majesty's memorialist, among many inferior services, had an opportunity of obtaining, and actually did obtain, the King of Spain's letter to the King of Naples

69

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

expressive of his intention to declare war against England. This important document, your Majesty's memorialist delivered to her husband, Sir William Hamilton, who immediately transmitted it to your Majesty's Ministers."

That Memorial shows Emma on stilts, she is much more herself writing to Greville about this time with extreme exultation and much underlining: "We have not time to write to you as we have been 3 days and nights waiting to send by this courier letters of *consequence* for our government. They ought to be gratefull to Sir William and *myself in particular*, as my situation at this Court is very *extraordinary* and what no person has as yet arrived at; but one as no thanks, and I am allmost sick of grandeur, we are tired to death with anxiety, and God knows were we shall soon be, and what will become of us if things go on as they do now."

Nevertheless, in spite of the declaration that she is allmost "sick of grandeur" she does not fail to remind Greville to "send me by the bearer a Dunstable hat, and some ribbands, or what you think will be acceptable."

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

And while Emma had “got into politicks” and was throwing herself with immense enthusiasm into the Queen’s schemes to improve the parlous position of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, threatened by France, honeycombed by Jacobin disaffection, so that as Emma said, “God knows where we shall soon be,” Nelson was in the very thick of memorable deeds. He had tasted both victory and defeat at St Vincent and Teneriffe, he had suffered the loss of his arm and the bitterness of feeling, “I am become a burthen to my friends and useless to my country.” But in the early summer of 1798 he and the British flag once more entered the Mediterranean. The “expected success,” however, on which Emma and the Queen were so confidently counting was some months denied to Nelson’s eager fleet—the French ships could not be found, there were difficulties as to watering and victualling, which Emma did all she knew (though probably less than she claimed) to overcome. Nelson, however, believed in her efforts to the fullest and wrote in Codicil to his Will:—

“The British fleet under my command

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

could never have returned a second time to Egypt had not Lady Hamilton's influence with the Queen of Naples caused letters to be wrote to the Governor of Syracuse, that he was to encourage the fleet to be supplied with everything, should they put into any port in Sicily. We put into Syracuse, and received every supply; went to Egypt and destroyed the French fleet."

From Syracuse he wrote the oft-quoted letter to Sir William and Lady Hamilton:—"MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Thanks to your exertions, we have victualled and watered: and surely watering at the Fountain of Arethusa we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze, and be assured I will return either crowned with laurel, or covered with cypress."

It was the laurel, not the cypress. Victory sailed in his flagship, and when Nelson returned again to Naples it was after his complete and overwhelming triumph of the Nile. The letter that Emma Hamilton wrote him when the news of the great battle reached her is wild with joy and hysteric with exultation, and little wonder. From her words we





BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

realise something of the temper of the time and the blaze of glory that shone on Nelson:—

“MY DEAR, DEAR SIR,—How shall I begin, what shall I say to you? ’Tis impossible I can write, for since last Monday I am delirious with joy and assure you I have a fevour caused by agitation and pleasure. God, what a victory! Never, never, has there been anything half so glorious, so compleat. I fainted when I heard the joyfull news, and fell on my side and am hurt, but [am] now well of that. I shou’d feil it a glory to die in such a cause. No, I would not like to die till I see and embrace the Victor of the *Nile*. How shall I describe to you the transport of Maria Carolina, ’tis not possible. She fainted and kissed her husband, her children, walked about the room, cried, kissed, and embraced every person near her, exclaiming, ‘*Oh, brave Nelson, oh, God bless and protect our brave deliverer, oh, Nelson, Nelson, what do we not owe to you, oh, Victor,—Savour of Itali, oh, that my swollen heart cou’d now tell him personally what we owe to him!*’

“You may judge, my dear Sir, of the rest,

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

but my head will not permit me to tell you half of the rejoicing, the Neapolitans are mad with joy, and if you was here now, you wou'd be killed with kindness. Sonets on sonets, illuminations, rejoicings; not a French dog dare shew his face. How I glory in the honner of my Country and my *Countryman*! I walk and tread in air with pride, feiling I was born in the same land with the victor Nelson and his gallant band. But no more, I cannot, dare not, trust myself, for I am not well. Little dear Captain Hoste will tell you the rest. He dines with us in the day, for he will not sleep out of his ship, and we Love him dearly. He is a fine, good lad. Sir William is delighted with him, and I say he will be a second Nelson. If he is only half a Nelson, he will be superior to all others.

“I send you two letters from my adorable Queen. One was written to me the day we received the glorious news, the other yesterday. Keep them, as they are in her own handwriting. I have kept copies only, but I feil that you ought to have them. If you had seen our meeting after the battle, but I will keep it all for your arrival. I coo'd not do justice

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

to her feiling nor to my own, with writing it; and we are preparing your apartment against you come. I hope it will not be long, for Sir William and I are so impatient to embrace you. I wish you cou'd have seen our house the 3 nights of illumination. 'Tis, 'twas covered with your glorious name. There were 3 thousand Lamps, and their shou'd have been 3 millions if we had had time. All the English vie with each other in celebrating this most gallant and ever memorable victory. Sir William is ten years younger since the happy news and he now only wishes to see his friend to be completely happy. How he glories in you when your name is mentioned. He cannot contain his joy, For God's sake come to Naples soon. We receive so many Sonets and Letters of congratulation. I send you some of them to show you how your success is felt here. How I felt for poor Troubridge. He must have been so angry on the sand-bank, so brave an officer! In short, I pity those who were not in the battle. I wou'd have been rather an English powder-monkey, or a swab in that great victory, than an Emperor out of it, but you will beso

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

tired of all this. Write or come soon to Naples, and rejoin your ever sincere and obliged friend,

EMMA HAMILTON."

That exuberant and overflowing letter is typical Emma, as is the statement she made to the hero at the same time, "My dress from head to foot is *Alla* Nelson. Ask Hoste. Even my shawl is in blue with gold anchors all over. My earrings are Nelson's anchors; in short, we are be-Nelsoned all over."

It is evident from his letters at this time that Nelson himself somewhat shrank from these extravagances of praise. Emma's account of the Queen's agitation moved him to say, "I only hope I shall not have to be a witness to a renewal of it." Boat-loads of "sonnets" had no attraction for him, "illuminations were only a weariness to his aching head. Emma was no Circe to this weary mariner—he had only seen her once five years earlier. In a letter to Lord St Vincent, written at sea, he says: "I detest this voyage to Naples. On the day Hoste left me I was taken ill with a fever, which has very near done my business: for eighteen hours my life was thought to be past hope; I am now up but

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

very weak, both in body and mind, from my cough and this fever."

On the 22nd of September 1798, the war-worn Admiral in his battered flagship the *Vanguard*, anchored in the Bay of Naples, amidst every sign of rejoicing. Sir William and Lady Hamilton of course were there to welcome him, and thus Nelson and Emma met again.

"I must endeavour to convey to you something of what passed," wrote Nelson to his wife in England, "but if it were so affecting to those who were only united to me by bonds of friendship, what must it be to my dearest wife, my friend, my everything which is most dear to me in the world? Sir William and Lady Hamilton came out to sea, attended by numerous Boats with emblems, etc. They, my most respectable friends, had really been laid up and seriously ill; first from anxiety, and then from joy. It was imprudently told Lady Hamilton in a moment, and the effect was like a shot; she fell apparently dead, and is not yet perfectly recovered from severe bruises. Alongside came my honoured friends: the scene in the boat was terribly af-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

fecting. Up flew her Ladyship, and exclaiming, 'O God! Is it possible?' she fell into my arms more dead than alive. Tears, however, soon set matters to rights. . . . I hope some day to have the pleasure of introducing you to Lady Hamilton: she is one of the very best women in this world, she is an honour to her sex. Her kindness, with Sir William's to me, is more than I can express. I am in their house, and I may tell you it required all the kindness of my friends to set me up. Lady Hamilton intends writing to you."

Emma wrote the intended letter to Lady Nelson and then a later one in October, telling her, "Lord Nelson is adored here, and looked on as the deliverer of this country." The King and Queen, she continues, if he had been their brother, "cou'd not have shewn him more respect and attentions. I need not tell your ladyship how happy Sir William and myself are at having an opertunity of seeing our dear, respectable, brave friend return here with so much honner to himself, and glory for his country. We only wanted you to be completely happy. Lord Nelson's wound is quite well. . . . The King is having

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

his picture set with dymonds for his Lordship, and the Queen has ordered a fine set of china with all the battles he *has* been engaged in, and his picture painted on china.”

All that admiration and wealth could do for Nelson was done by Emma and her husband. She was an admirable nurse, and deluged him with attentions and flattery—without doubt exulting much, even before her feelings were engaged, in having the hero of England under her roof. After his departure, recovered by “nursing and asse’s milk, Lord St Vincent wrote to Emma:—

“Ten thousand most grateful thanks are due to your Ladyship for restoring the health of our invaluable friend Nelson, on whose life the fate of the remaining governments in Europe, whose system has not been deranged by these devils, depends. Pray, do not let your fascinating Neapolitan dames approach too near him; for he is made of flesh and blood, and cannot resist their temptations.”

But Emma herself was to prove more dangerous than any “fascinating Neapolitan dames.” In a letter to his stern old commander-in-chief, who yet loved him so well, Nel-

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

son wrote playfully, though with an under-current of meaning, "I am writing opposite Lady Hamilton, therefore you will not be surprised at the glorious jumble of this letter. Were your Lordship in my place, I much doubt if you could write so well ; our hearts and our hands must be all in a flutter : Naples is a dangerous place, and we must keep clear of it."

Nelson's old father had said of him that "the Tender Passions" are "rooted and twined into *his* constitution." The mistake of his marriage had been that his wife was a woman entirely lacking the impulsive ardour and warm responsive heart that characterised Emma. He had not guessed, in his life at sea, what he lacked till he met the beautiful lady of the "Attitudes," but once he knew his need and the woman who could satisfy it, the fatal breach was made—though for long Nelson was honourably unconscious of the road his admiration for Lady Hamilton was leading him. He found her not only beautiful and kind, but an able ally and ambassadress in political affairs. It was undoubtedly partly owing to Emma's influence and intense



LADY HAMILTON AS "AMBADDRESS"

*Engraved by T. G. Appleton, after George R.
of Messrs Henry Graves & Co., Ltd., & P.
owners of the copyright, and publishers*

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

partisanship for the Queen that Nelson was led to involve himself so deeply in the affairs of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies—he distinctly overstepped the simple duties of a British seaman, to “keep foreigners from fooling us.” He was a statesman as well as a sailor, but his statesmanship for Sicily was the indirect cause of the wreck of his private life. He and the Queen of Naples and Emma were all ardently united in the wish that the King should declare open war upon the French. In October Emma was with the Queen at Caserta and wrote to Nelson:—

“I flatter myself WE SPUR them, for I am always with the Queen, and I hold out your energick language to her. . . . I translate from our papers for her to inspire her, *or them*, I should say, with some of our spirits and energy. How delighted we Booth were to sit and speak of you. She loves, respects and admires you. For myself, I will leave you to guess my feelings.”

In reality Emma was little in the habit of leaving anyone to guess her feelings—she expressed them with a freedom and simplicity that led many people to call her vulgar. But

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

once he had come under her spell Nelson delighted in her enthusiasm, however she might express it. "If I were King of England," she told him, "I wou'd make you the most noble present, Duke Nelson, Marquis Nile, Earl Aboukir, Viscount Pyramid, Baron Crocodile, and Prince Victory, that posterity might have you in all forms." In which she shows the defect of taste that would gild the lily, not realising that the simple name of Nelson was greater than any title which might be added to it. Emma's delight in material honours is shown in the letter in which she informed Nelson of what is being sent him from Constantinople:—

"A *pelicia* of Gibelinawith a feather for your hat of Dymonds, large, most magnificent, and 2 thousand Zechins for the wounded men, and a letter to you from the Grand Signor. God bless him! There is a frigate sent off on purpose. We expect it here. I must see the present. How I shall look at it, smell it, taste it, toch it, put the pelice over my own shoulders, look in the glas, and say Viva il Turk! . . . God bless, or Mahomet bless, the old Turk; I say, no longer Turk, but good Christian."

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

From Caserta she wrote much to Nelson, telling him how political affairs moved at Court, of the cold conduct of Austria and of Mack's delays, though at last the army was to march. Then we get Emma in her most soaring mood:—

“I flatter myself I did much. For whilst the passions of the Queen [were] up and agitated, I got up, put out my left arm like you, spoke the language of truth to her, painted the drooping situation of this fine country, her friends sacrificed, her husband, children, and herself led to the Block; and eternal dishonour to her memory, after for once having been active, doing her duty in fighting bravely to the last, to save her Country, her Religion, from the hands of the rapacious murderers of her sisters, and the Royal Family in France, that she was sure of being lost, if they were inactive, and there was a chance of being saved if they made use now of the day and struck now while all minds are imprest with the Horrors their neighbours are suffering from these Robbers. In short, there was a Council, and it was determined to march out and help themselves; and, sure, their

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

poor fool of a son" [meaning their son-in law, the Emperor of Austria] "will not, cannot, but come out. He must bring a hundred and fifty thousand men in the Venetian State. The French cou'd be shut in between the two armys, Italy cleared, and peace restored.

Then she falls into a pæan of praise of Nelson himself—at this time her ardent admiration was about equally divided between him and the Queen of Naples: "But how everybody loves and esteems you. 'Tis universal from the high to the low; do you know I sing now nothing but the Conquering Hero. . . . God bless you, prosper and assist you in all you undertake; and may you live Long, Long, Long, for the sake of your country, your King, your family, all Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, and for the scourge of France, but particularly for the happiness of Sir William and self, who Love you, admire you, and glory in your friendship." She tells him, "Your statue ought to be made of pure gold and placed in the middle of London. Never, never, was there such a battle, and if you are not regarded as you ought, and I wish, I will renounce my country and become

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

either a Mameluck or a Turk. The Queen yesterday said to me, 'the more I think on it, the greater I find it, and I feel such a gratitude to the warrior, the glorious Nelson, that my respect is such that I cou'd fall at his honuer'd feet and kiss them.' You that know us booth, and how alike we are in many things, that is, I as Emma Hamilton and she as Queen of Naples—imagine us booth speaking of you. We touch ourselves into terms of rapture, respect, and admiration, and conclude there is not such another in the world. I told her Majesty, we onely wanted Lady Nelson to be the female *tria juncta in uno*, for we all Love you, and yet all three differently, and yet all equally—if you can make that out. Sir William laughs at us, but he owns women have great souls, at least his has. I would not be a lukewarm friend for the world."

"I am no one's enemy, and unfortunately am difficult and cannot make friendships with all. But the few friends I have, I wou'd die for them. And I assure you now, if things take an unfortunate turn here, and the Queen dies at her post, I will remain with

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

her. I feel I owe it to her friendship uncommon for me."

Emma's boast of what she would do in a time of danger was no idle one—the quality of courage were hers in a marked degree, coupled with a sense of drama that carried her triumphantly through danger. As Greville said of her: "Emma's passion is admiration, and it is capable of aspiring to any line which will be celebrated, and it would be indifferent when on that key, whether she was Lucretia or Sappho, or Scævola or Regulus; anything grand, masculine or feminine, she could take up."

The time was sufficiently perilous and threatening to test Emma's sterner qualities. The King of Naples and General Mack—the "strategist of unalloyed incompetency and unvaried failure" had entered Rome triumphantly with their army: but that was the end of triumph. The French routed them completely, the King fled. As Nelson said with natural scorn: "The Neapolitan officers have not lost much honour, for God knows they have but little to lose; but they lost all they had."

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

King Ferdinand, as has been said, fled home, bringing the war that was to have been diverted from his own territory right into the kingdom, for the angry French followed him. And then ensued a time of tumult—"The King is returned here, and everything is as bad as possible," wrote Nelson. Naples was in a turmoil of terror, fear of the French driving the Lazzaroni to wild excesses, while a portion of the population was secretly in league with the foe. Revolution and bloodshed filled the air, and it suffices to say that Nelson himself, for the first and only time in his life, was driven to counsel flight. To this crisis Emma arose fully, both her dramatic and her practical instincts awake. She took the hapless and somewhat helpless royal family under her wing and helped to arrange their affairs for them. If they fled they must take their treasures with them, their gold, jewels, paintings, valuable vases, and furniture, not leaving these things to be despoiled by the hated French. Transport was provided by Nelson, who sent for the *Goliath*, for Troubridge in the *Culloden* and his squadron. The famous *Vanguard* was to

87

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

carry the royal family and the Hamiltons. "Getting ready for sea," writes Nelson, "and getting off the valuable effects of her Sicilian Majesty in the night time." A day later they are "Smuggling on board the Queen's diamonds." For seven succeeding nights Lady Hamilton received at the Embassy cases containing the royal treasures, "to the amount, I am confident," wrote Nelson, "of full two millions five hundred thousand pounds sterling." These cases were conveyed secretly from the Embassy to the ships, for had the Lazzaroni guessed that their King was preparing to leave them they would have been almost ready to murder him and certainly would have detained him by force. The night of the 21st of December was the one fixed for the flight, and on that very evening Sir William and Lady Hamilton with Nelson attended a big reception in order to avert any suspicion of their imminent departure. In a letter to Greville, written after they had all reached Palermo, Emma gives an account of the whole adventure—an adventure so much after her own heart:—

"On the 21st, at ten at night, Lord Nelson,



BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

Sir Wm., Mother and self went out to pay a visit, sent all our servants away, and ordered them in 2 hours to come with the coach, and ordered supper at home, when they were gone, we set off, walked to our boat, and after two hours got to the *Vanguard*. Lord N. *then* went with armed boats to a secret staircase that goes into the Queen's room, and with a dark lantern, cutlases, pistols, etc., brought off every soul, ten in number, to the *Vanguard* at twelve o'clock. If we had remained to the next day we shou'd have all been imprisoned."

The royal family and their numerous belongings were safely and without alarm bestowed in the *Vanguard*, but when after two days' delay in waiting for further consignments of treasure and for refugees—the squadron up-anchored and sailed from the Bay of Naples, it was with a dropping barometer and prospects of foul weather. The next day a great storm struck them. "It blew harder than I ever experienced since I have been at sea," said Nelson.

The royal family, with their children and attendants were all prostrate with fear and

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

sea-sickness—and little wonder, for the *Vanguard*'s sails were split to shreds and it seemed at one time as though her masts would have to be cut away. Emma, in these terrifying circumstances, proved herself made of heroic stuff. She was the mainstay and the nurse of the unhappy royalties, and her attention to their needs was so unceasing that as Nelson said, "nor did her Ladyship enter a bed the whole time they were on board." On Christmas Day, 1798, the youngest son of the King and Queen died in the storm. The baby princeling, Emma tells Greville, was "six years old, my favourite, taken with convulsions in the midst of the storm, and, at seven in the evening of Christmas Day, expired in my arms, not a soul to help me, as the few women her Majesty brought on board were incapable of helping her or the poor royal children."

The next day the battered *Vanguard* anchored at Palermo. Shortly after the landing of the royal party Emma wrote: "The Queen whom I love better than any person in the world, is very unwell. We weep together, and now that is our only comfort. Sir William

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

and the King are philosophers; nothing upsets them, thank God, and *we* are scolded even for shewing proper sensibility."

All the cry was for "dear, dear Naples." Sir William complained that he had been driven from his comfortable Embassy to a house here without chimneys, and calculated only for the summer." He grieved over his abandoned treasures: "We have left everything at Naples," his wife wrote, "but the vases and best pictures, 3 houses elegantly furnished, all our horses and our 6 or 7 carriages, I think, is enough for the vile French. For we cou'd not get our things off, not to betray the royal family."

While they were at Palermo, Nelson and the Hamiltons shared a house and divided the expenses. In this daily companionship Nelson grew to that admiration for Emma which was finally to lead him to such disastrous lengths. He had told Commodore Duckworth just before the flight from Naples, "My situation in this country has had doubtless *one* rose, but it has been plucked from a bed of thorns." In another letter he calls her with a very profusion of praise,

91

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

“Our dear Lady Hamilton, whom to see is to admire, but, to know, are to be added honour and respect; her head and heart surpass her beauty, which cannot be equalled by anything I have seen.” With a sort of simplicity very characteristic Nelson praised Emma with such warmth to his wife that Lady Nelson naturally became uneasy and desired to come out and join him. Nelson definitely forbade this in the somewhat curious words: “You would by February have seen how unpleasant it would have been had you followed any advice which carried you from England to a wandering sailor. I could, if you had come, *only* have struck my flag, and carried you back again, for it would have been impossible to have set up an establishment at either Naples or Palermo.” When Lady Nelson inquired as to the Admiral’s return to England, he told her, “If I have the happiness of seeing their Sicilian Majesties safe on the throne again, it is probable I shall still be home in the summer. Good Sir William, Lady Hamilton and myself are the mainsprings of the machine which manages what is going on in this country. We are all bound

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

to England, when we canquit our posts with propriety.”

Over all this time at Palermo hang an enervating atmosphere, the approaching thunder-cloud which was to wreck Nelson's domestic peace and tarnish his glorious name. He struggled against the obsession that was overcoming his scruples, he was at times desperately miserable, as his letters show—the fatal thing was that Emma, kind and beautiful and dangerously responsive, was always present to comfort and soothe him, to minister with ardent flatteries to his depression.

But more efficacious than any woman's flattery in removing his low spirits was the prospect of something to be done. The royal family had not long been in refuge at Palermo ere it became evident that the Parthenopean Republic, founded by the victorious French in place of the Kingdom of Naples, was resting upon very shaky foundations. Encouraged by this knowledge steps were taken to raise a huge peasant army under the command of Cardinal Ruffo—it was called the “Christian Army”—against the Jacobin rebels. The people welcomed the “Christian

93

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

Army" as deliverers and the Parthenopean Republic rapidly crumbled away. It only needed the appearance of Nelson and his ships at Naples, the annulment of the treaty of capitulation with the remnant of the Neapolitan Jacobins in the castles of Nuovo and Uovo, the stern execution of the traitor Caraciolo, and King Ferdinand of Naples was restored to his own again. The King and Queen stayed comfortably in Naples while these things were done for them, though Sir William and Lady Hamilton were both with Nelson in the *Vanguard* at the time of the surrender of the rebels and the execution of Caraciolo from the *Minerva's* yard-arm. Much controversy rages round these matters but they belong to Lord Nelson's professional career, not to the story of Emma Hamilton. It suffices to say that the oft-repeated story of Emma being present at Caraciolo's execution and taking pleasure in the spectacle is an ugly untruth. The enraged Queen Maria Carolina might have done so had she been at Naples, for she was of a vengeful disposition—not so Emma.

After the execution of the traitor, King

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

Ferdinand came back to Naples—though for a time he took up his actual abode on board Nelson's *Foudroyant*. The Queen stayed behind at Palermo, being "obliged to do so on many grounds," as she told Emma. So Emma was in a situation after her own heart in the flagship, the centre of the scene. She writes with great zest to Greville: "Everything goes well on here. We have got Naples, all the Forts; and to-night our troops go to Capua. His Majesty is with *us* on board, were he holds his Councils and Levees every day. . . . The King has bought his experience most dearly, but at last he knows his friends from his enemies; and allso knows the defects of his former government, and is determined to remedy them. For he has great good sense, and his misfortunes have made him steady and look into himself. The Queen is not yet come. She sent me as her Deputy; for I am very popular, speak the Neapolitan language, and considered, with Sir William the friend of the people. The Queen is waiting at Palermo, and she has determined, as there has been a great outcry against her, not to risk coming with the King."

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

But she goes on to tell Greville that she has “made” the “Queen’s party, and the people have prayed for her to come back, and she is very popular. I send her every night a messenger to Palermo, with all the news and letters, and she gives me the orders the same. I have given audiences to those of her party, and settled matters between the nobility and her Majesty. She is not to see on her arrival any of her former evil counsellors, nor the women of fashion, alltho’ Ladys of the Bedchamber, formerly her friends and companions, who did her dishonour by their desolute life. *All, all* is changed. She has been very *unfortunate*; but she is a good woman, and has sense enough to profit by her *past unhappiness*, and will make for the future *amende honorable* for the past. In short, if I can judge, it may turn out fortunate that the Neapolitans have had a dose of Republicanism. But what a glory to our good King, to our Country, that *we*—our brave fleet, our great Nelson—have had the happiness of restoring the King to his throne, to the Neapolitans their much-loved King, and been the instrument of giving a future good

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

and just government to the Neapolitans! . . . We shall, as soon as the government is fixed, return to Palermo, and bring back the Royal family; for I foresee not any permanent government till that event takes place. Nor wou'd it be politick, after all the hospitality the King and Queen received at Palermo, to carry them off in a hurry. So you see there is great management required." She declares, "I am quite worn out. For I am interpreter to Lord Nelson, the King and Queen; and altogether feil quite shattered, but as things go well, that keeps me up."

There is little doubt that the importance of her position and the constant admiration of Nelson also helped to "keep her up." Nelson's signal-midshipman in the *Foudroyant* at this time wrote in his "Reminiscences": "She was much liked by every one in the fleet, except Captain Nesbit, Lady Nelson's son; and her recommendation was the sure road to promotion. The fascination of her elegant manners was irresistible, and her voice most melodious. Bending her graceful form over her superb harp, on the *Foudroyant's* quarter-deck each day after dinner, in

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

Naples' Bay, she sang the praises of Nelson, at which the hero blushed like a fair maiden listening to the first compliment paid to her beauty."

The first anniversary of the Battle of the Nile was celebrated on board the *Foudroyant* with illuminations and festivities, in which Emma took her usual dazzling part. A few days afterwards the flagship returned to Palermo, where the Queen was awaiting to embrace Emma. She had told Emma's mother, left at Palermo—the words are Emma's own—"she ought to be proud of her glorious daughter that has done so much in these last suffering months. There is great preparations for our return. The Queen comes out with all Palermo to meet us. A landing-place is made—balls, suppers, illuminations, all ready. The Queen has prepared my cloathes—in short, if I have fag'd, I am more than repaid."

After the return of the *Foudroyant* the King and Queen and Emma indulged in the most extravagant festivities it is possible to imagine. Jewelled swords and the Dukedom of Bronte were pressed upon Nelson's re-

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

luctant acceptance; jewels and luxurious clothes were laid in Emma's willing hand. Statues of the Admiral, supported by models of Sir William and Lady Hamilton, were crowned with laurel twined with diamonds—the whole scene savours perilously of the absurd, but Emma's flamboyant taste delighted in these things and Nelson was too blinded by his admiration of her every action to see anything in its true light. But rumours of these doings reached England and did not meet with approval; he was respectfully warned that he was making a mistake. In his strained and agitated mood Nelson was deeply hurt and wrote like a child to the First Lord, "Do not, my dear Lord, let the Admiralty write harshly to me—my generous soul cannot bear it." The good Tourbridge, one of his "band of brothers" of the Nile, also wrote urgently to him at the end of 1799:—

"Pardon me, my Lord, it is my sincere esteem for you that makes me mention it. I know you can have no pleasure sitting up all night at cards; why, then, sacrifice your health, comfort, purse, ease, everything, to

99

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

the customs of a country where your stay cannot belong? . . . Your Lordship is a stranger to half that happens, or the talk it occasions; if you knew what your friends feel for you, I am sure you would cut all the nocturnal parties. The gambling of the people at Palermo is publicly talked of everywhere. I beseech your Lordship leave off. I wish my pen could tell you my feelings, I am sure you would oblige me. Lady H——'s character will suffer, nothing can prevent people from talking. A gambling woman, in the eye of an Englishman, is lost."

How pathetically inadequate was that, "I beseech your Lordship leave off," from the simple seaman who loved him, to stem the flood of Nelson's passion for Lady Hamilton. Emma's optimist view of the matter is given in a letter to Greville of February, 1800:—"We are more united and comfortable than ever, in spite of the infamous Jacobin papers jealous of Lord Nelson's glory and Sir William's and mine. But we do not mind them. Lord N. is a truly vertuous and great man; and because we have been fagging and ruining our health, and sacrificing every comfort

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

in the cause of loyalty, our private characters are to be stabbed in the dark. First it was said Sir W. and Lord N. fought ; then that we played and lost. First Sir W. and Lord N. live like brothers ; next Lord N. never plays: and this I give you my word of honour. So I beg you will contradict any of these vile reports. Not that Sir W. and Lord N. mind it ; and I get scolded by the Queen and all of them for having suffered one day's uneasiness."

But it is to be feared that a letter of Lady Minto's written a few months later gives a truer picture of the state of affairs at Palermo—power and predominance inevitably brought out the coarseness of fibre of Lady Hamilton. It needed a much finer nature than hers to survive unspoiled such crude and dazzling success as had fallen to her share.

"Nelson and the Hamiltons," wrote Lady Minto, "all lived together in a house of which he bore the expense, which was enormous, and every sort of gaming went on half the night. Nelson used to sit with large parcels of gold before him, and generally go to sleep,

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

Lady Hamilton taking from the heap without counting, and playing with his money to the amount of £500 a night. Her rage is play, and Sir William says when he is dead she will be a beggar. However, she has about £30,000 worth of diamonds from the royal family in presents. She sits at the Councils, and rules everything and everybody."

For the first and last time in his life, Nelson was a little warped from the high path of his professional duty—he captured the *Généreux*, one of the two ships escaped from the devastation of the Nile, but would not stay to capture the other, the *Guillaume Tell*, because he must "go to my friends, at Palermo," because for once the voice of Emma sounded louder in his ears than the voice of duty. Moreover, he was considerably fretted by having Lord Keith, with whom he got on exceeding ill, as his Commander-in-chief. This behaviour was not regarded with favour in England, and a cold breath came into that Southern atmosphere with Lord Spencer's letter to Nelson, with its unmistakable, if veiled, command:—

"It appeared to me much more advisable

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

for you to come home at once, than to be obliged to remain inactive at Palermo, while active service was going on in other parts of the station. . . . I am joined in the opinion by all your friends here, that you will be more likely to recover your health and strength in England than in an inactive situation at a Foreign Court, however pleasing the respect and gratitude shown to you for your services may be, and no testimonies of respect and gratitude from that Court to you can be, I am convinced, too great for the very essential services you have rendered it."

About this time Lord Minto wrote: "I have letters from Nelson and Lady Hamilton. It does not seem clear whether he will go home. I hope he will not for his own sake, and he will at least, I hope, take Malta first. He does not seem at all conscious of the sort of discredit he has fallen into, or the cause of it, for he still writes, not wisely, about Lady H., and all that. But it is hard to condemn and use ill a hero, as he is in his own element, for being foolish about a woman who has art enough to make fools of many wiser than an admiral."

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

Though for a while Nelson might not seem clear "whether he will go home," he had little doubt about it when at the end of April Sir William Hamilton presented his letters of recall. If the Hamiltons were going home he was going too ; "I go with our dear friends Sir William and Lady Hamilton," he wrote to Minto. One of these dear friends had become so much more than a dear friend to him that he was determined he would not be parted from her, though the whole of Europe might gossip, though his patient wife in England might grieve and wonder. But the violence of his passion for Emma was eclipsing all his upright principles of right and wrong.

It may be imagined with what regrets and grief Emma said farewell to the Italy that had seen her triumphs, that harmonised so well with her own Southern luxury-loving temperament. She was leaving a land of sun and colour, an easy-going people, for her own country with its far more critical and censorious public. A cold breath must have struck her at the thought of England : even her somewhat blunted susceptibilities must have realised that not the finest of her "At-



LADY HAMILTON EN SIRYLLI

Painted by *ms. 9*

BATTLE OF NILE, & AFTER

titudes'' would be held excuse for her general behaviour. Most of all, she must have known that it would be impossible for Nelson to live with herself and Sir William in the easy way he had done at Naples and Palermo—he had a wife in England.

Nelson and the Hamiltons returned home not by sea, for Lord Keith would not grant a ship, saying contemptuously that "Lady Hamilton had had command of the Fleet long enough," but by way of the Continent, Vienna, Prague, Dresden, and Hamburg. In this procession through Europe Emma Hamilton was particularly flamboyant—it might seem that she meant to display before everyone how great was her hold upon Nelson. Certain it is that at no time of her varied career is she so little attractive—everyone who met the Nelson-Hamilton party leaves behind in their diaries and letters the impression of turning to stare with raised eyebrows at Emma sounding the loud timbrel. But Nelson was fathoms deep in love, he thought all her actions and attitudes perfection. There was probably a strain of defiance in him too, for on the 6th of November 1800,

105

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

when he landed at Yarmouth in his native county of Norfolk, his first appearance in England since the glorious victory of the Nile, it was with Lady Hamilton hanging on his arm.

CHAPTER FIFTH LORD
NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

CHAPTER FIFTH LORD NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

LORD NELSON MET HIS WIFE AGAIN AFTER his long absence—an absence filled with public and private events of the most momentous nature—at Nerot's Hotel in St James's Street, when he reached London. It was his wish, not her negligence, that had prevented her coming to Yarmouth to welcome him. But her welcome must have been a somewhat uncertain one—another woman stood between them, for though Lady Nelson had not then realised how completely she had been supplanted, she must have been full of natural fears. It is evident that at the beginning she endeavoured to put as good an aspect upon affairs as possible, she had written to Yarmouth to ask Sir William and Lady Hamilton to stay with herself and husband at Round Wood. But the visit never took place—the inevitable explosion occurred in London. Nelson at first endeavoured to believe it possible for Lady Hamilton and his wife to live together on friendly terms, to believe that somehow the impossible situation might be adjusted. But he soon saw that things looked different in Eng-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

land, the Mediterranean atmosphere, the Mediterranean glamour, were gone. "This place of London but ill-suits my disposition," he remarked with bitterness. The misery of the situation was working on his mind, and there can be little doubt that, quite apart from the moral wrong of which he was guilty, he treated his wife with scant courtesy and no consideration whatever for her most justly injured feelings. Emma Hamilton, in attempted justification of herself and Nelson, laid stress on Lady Nelson's bad temper, declaring that it drove her Lord into wandering wretchedly through the streets of London all one night, till at last he found refuge at Sir William's house in Grosvenor Square.

If Lady Nelson displayed ill-temper she had reason for it. Nelson apparently made little, if any, attempt to hide his entire devotion to Lady Hamilton. He had given her his heart, and expected that shortly she would give him what he had always longed for—a child of his own. Therefore, as Miss Cornelia Knight, who had travelled with the Nelson-Hamilton party through Europe,

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

says, he felt it necessary "to devote himself more and more to Lady Hamilton for the purpose of what he called supporting her." It was with this idea of "supporting" her that he went with Sir William and Lady Hamilton to spend the Christmas of 1800 with "Vathek" Beckford at Fonthill Abbey. His own wife he left behind in lodgings at Arlington Street. The callousness of the action was totally against Nelson's nature in its normal state—but his passion for Emma, which had taken complete possession of him, blinded him to everything but her needs and her wishes.

Before they went to Fonthill Abbey William Beckford wrote to Lady Hamilton of the Hero of the Nile : "I exist in the hopes of seeing Fonthill honoured by his victorious presence, and if his engagements permit his accompanying you here, we shall enjoy a few comfortable days of repose, uncontaminated by the sights and prattle of drawing-room parasites." Knowing Emma's tastes he flattered her in the manner she liked, calling her a "superior being," and saying, "You must shine steadily. . . . That light alone

LADY HAMILTON : A STUDY

which beams from your image, ever before my fancy, like a vision of the Madonna della Gloria, keeps my eyes sufficiently open to subscribe myself with tolerable distinctness." But those gilded remarks hardly represented his real opinion, for many years later, replying to the question whether Lady Hamilton was a fascinating woman, he said:—

"I never thought her so. She was somewhat masculine, but symmetrical in figure, so that Sir William called her his Grecian. She was full in person, not fat, but *embon-point*. Her carriage often majestic, rather than feminine. Not at all delicate, ill-bred, often very affected, a devil in temper when set on edge. She had beautiful hair and displayed it. Her countenance was agreeable, fine, hardly beautiful, but the outline excellent. She affected sensibility, but felt none—was artful ; and no wonder, she had been trained in the Court of Naples—a fine school for an English woman of any stamp. Nelson was infatuated. She could make him believe anything."

Soon after Nelson's return to his wife in

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

Arlington Street, the final rupture came. Driven beyond endurance by some reference of her husband to "dear Lady Hamilton," Lady Nelson rose up from the breakfast table and exclaimed, "I am sick of hearing of dear Lady Hamilton, and I am resolved that you shall give up either her or me." Whereupon the Admiral said, "Take care, Fanny, what you say. I love you sincerely ; but I cannot forget my obligations to Lady Hamilton, or speak of her otherwise than with affection and admiration." "Without one soothing word or gesture," says Nelson's solicitor, William Haslewood, who was present at this unhappy scene, "but muttering something about her mind being made up, Lady Nelson left the room, and shortly after drove from the house. They never lived together again."

In itself the final quarrel was trivial, but things had reached the breaking-point. Though Lady Nelson later begged that the breach between them might be healed, he was adamant and his decision final. "Living I have done all in my power for you," he said, having made her an ample allowance, "and if dead, you will find I have done the

115

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

same; therefore, my only wish is to be left to myself." Thenceforward he devoted himself to England and to Emma.

No qualms of conscience seemed to have disturbed Emma. With extreme bad taste she nicknamed Lady Nelson "Tom Tit," and took visible delight in her discomfiture. She tells Mrs William Nelson, whom she vows is so "congenial," "Not so with *Tom Tit*, for there was an antipathy not to be described."

But Nelson could see no fault in her, and if possible he loved her more dearly than before, when at the close of January 1801, their child Horatia was born. This event apparently was so well managed by Emma that no one, save her own old mother, knew it had happened. It will always remain a mystery as to whether Sir William Hamilton was as much in the dark as to the state of affairs between his wife and Nelson, as he appeared to be. He was old and adverse to rows, maybe he thought it the wiser part to appear ignorant. Anyway, the child Horatia, though smuggled out of the house soon after her birth, was later on brought back

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

again quite openly, with a train of fictitious circumstances to account for her appearance.

At this time Nelson had hoisted his flag as Second in Command of the Channel Fleet, and during the enforced separation from his "Wife in the sight of Heaven" some method of correspondence safer than using their own names had to be discovered, so, to serve their need, a Mr and Mrs Thompson were invented—Thompson supposed to be an officer in Nelson's own ship—his wife and child on shore under Lady Hamilton's kind care. The disguise frequently wears very thin. In one of the "Thompson" letters Nelson says, "I cannot write, I am so agitated by this young man at my elbow, I believe he is foolish, he does nothing but rave about you and her. I own I participate in his joy."

His own voice speaks very clearly through the veil of another "Thompson" letter:—

"I sit down, my dear Mrs T., by desire of poor Thompson to write you a line, not to assure you of his eternal love and affection for you and his dear child, but only to say that he is well and as happy as he can be separated from all which he holds dear in

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

this world. He has not thoughts separated from your love and your interest. They are united with his; one fate, one destiny, he assures me, awaits you both. What can I say more? Only to kiss his child for him: and love him as truly, sincerely, and faithfully as he does you; which is from the bottom of his soul. He desires that you will more and more attach yourself to dear Lady Hamilton."

Emma kept the Admiral's letters to her against his express wish, for he begged her to burn them, for fear they fell into other hands, as he burnt hers. Therefore it is that we have only Nelson's side of this Thompson correspondence.

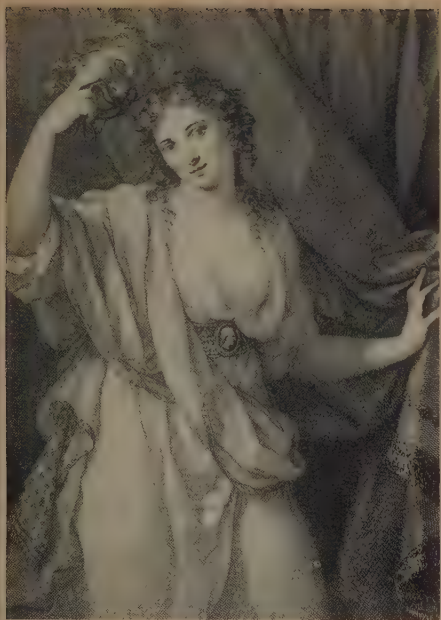
While Nelson was wearing out his heart in absence at sea, Emma was indulging in the social gaieties which she loved; she and Sir William were established in a house in Piccadilly, giving dinners and entertainments. The Prince of Wales invited himself to dinner, as he wished to hear Emma sing, and the news of this threw Nelson into a very passion of jealousy and fear and rage—"Good God!" he cried, "He will be next to

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

you, and telling you soft things." But after all the dinner fell through, and there was no need to test the truth of a prophecy made of her at Dresden, "She will captivate the Prince of Wales, whose mind is as vulgar as her own, and play a great part in England." Nelson called her his "Saint" and "Guardian Angel," but his agitation at the thought of her meeting the First Gentleman in Europe was pitiable. Emma, however, took the matter very calmly. She enjoyed success, and could not understand Nelson's finer scruples of the heart. Even before Nelson's death she was beginning only too visibly to show that coarsening which marked her so lamentably at the end. But we have one little picture of her at this time which shows her still "the same Emma," still ardent in her excitability as of old. It was after the news of the Battle of the Baltic had reached them, and Sir William wrote to Nelson, "You would have laughed to have seen what I saw yesterday. *Emma* did not know whether she was on her head or heels—in such a hurry to tell you the great news that she could utter nothing but tears of joy and

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

tenderness." It was some time after the battle before Nelson was able to return to England. Once more he landed at Yarmouth, and hastened to join his Emma. From London they all went to spend some time at Boxhill and Staines. The country pleasures he there enjoyed probably increased Nelson's desire—the true sailor's dream—for a country home of his own. Even before he went to the Baltic he had been discussing with Emma the advantages of such a plan. No doubt she would enter enthusiastically into his scheme, and in her hands he left the buying and furnishing of such a place. The power to spend was one Emma always enjoyed using, and Nelson had given her both the power and the money. She chose Merton Place in Surrey—"A seaman alone," wrote Sir William to the Admiral, "would have given a fine woman full power to choose and fit up a residence for him, without seeing it himself. You are in luck, for on my conscience, I verily believe that a place so suitable to your views could not have been found and at so cheap a rate. . . . I never saw so many conveniences united in so small a



THE GREEK GODDESS, VENUS, BY J. M. W. TURNER, 1817.

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

compass. You have nothing but to come and to enjoy immediately. You have a good mile of pleasant dry walk around your farm. It would make you laugh to see Emma and her mother fitting up pigstyes and hen-coopes, and already the canal is enlivened with ducks, and the cock is strutting with his hen about the walks."

Before Nelson was able to come ashore and see the "Dear, dear Merton" he was to love so much, he delighted in every detail Emma sent him. "I assure you, my dear friend," he wrote, "that I had rather read and hear all your little story of a white hen getting into a tree, an anecdote of Fatima" [pet name for the little Horatia], "or hear you call—'Cupidy! Cupidy!' than any speech I shall hear in Parliament." He told her, "I expect that all animals will increase where you are, for I never expect that you will suffer any to be killed." Again, she was to be "Lady Paramount of all the territories and waters of Merton." Then there came the curious touch, "Have we a nice Church at Merton? We will set an example of goodness to the under parishioners."

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

At last he reached Merton and found it all his hopes had pictured. In a letter to Mrs William Nelson Emma gives a pretty little picture of the war-worn Admiral's country place:—"He *has* been *very, very* happy since he arrived, and Charlotte" [Nelson's niece] "*has* been very attentive to him. Indeed we *all* make it our constant business to make him *happy*. Sir William is fonder than ever, and we manage very well in regard to our establishment, pay share and share alike, so it comes easy to both partys. . . . We were all at church, and Charlotte turned over the prayers for her uncle. As to Sir William, they are the greatest friends in the world. . . . Sir William and Charlotte caught 3 large pike. She helps him and milord with their great coats on; so now I have nothing to do."

Merton Place, under Emma's hospitable and lavish rule, became a centre for all Nelson's relations, who flocked there when they pleased, as did many friends and acquaintances who had but the slightest claim to entertainment. When Nelson bought Merton it was with a wish for "retirement" and peace, but the views of the "Lady Para-

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

mount" were different, and as usual he gave her the way that pleased her. Emma, apparently, could not be happy without a large and admiring circle round her. Sir William, growing old and feeble, longed for a quieter life, and finding speech of no avail wrote his wife a long and very temperately expressed protest against her extravagant and restless mode of living. But it was in vain—his wishes were of very little importance. Emma was still fond of him in a tolerant way, but her attitude was that he mustn't be tiresome and interfere. In the early spring of 1803 he died, and Emma, who had not regarded him very much in those last years, was immediately plunged into grief. "Unhappy day for the forlorn Emma," she wrote, "Ten minutes past ten dear blessed Sir William left me." Nelson at the same time said, "Our dear Sir William died at ten minutes past ten this morning in Lady Hamilton's and my arms without a sigh or a struggle. Poor Lady H. is, as you may expect, desolate."

Captain Thomas Hardy's curt comment expressed the opinion of the world in general

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

ral: "Sir William Hamilton died on Sunday afternoon, and was quite sensible to the last. How her Ladyship will manage to live with the Hero of the Nile now, I am at a loss to know, at least in an honourable way."

This problem probably did not disturb them as much as it did other people. Lady Hamilton was quite accustomed to defying public opinion, and there was a simplicity and intensity of conviction about Nelson that lifted him beyond ordinary gossip and criticism. But war broke out again with France and Nelson was called to sea, away from the home and the woman he loved. Little was left to him of home life—for two years from that time he never set foot outside his flagship, the *Victory* of imperishable memory. "I have not a thought except on you and the French fleet," he told Emma, "all my thoughts, plans, and toils tend to those two objects. Don't laugh at my putting you and the French fleet together, but you cannot be separated."

Emma, left at Merton, continued to live in her old lavish, expensive way. She entertained and celebrated the anniversaries of

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

Nelson's victories with feasting and songs, and as a consequence of this manner of living she got deeply into debt, in spite of her handsome income. But Nelson never realised her extravagance—"we shall not want with prudence," he told her—or if he did he realised it only as a virtue: "Your purse, my dear Emma, will always be empty; your heart is generous beyond your means." How generous he was himself to her is shown not only by the large sums of money he gave her, but by the many beautiful and costly objects he bestowed upon her. When he was at sea he lamented, "I go nowhere to get anything pretty; therefore do not think me neglectful." But he was as jealous as he was generous, Mr Scott, his secretary, had received from Venice "two very handsome Venetian chains," which he wished to present to Lady Hamilton, but the Admiral forbade it. "I allow no one to make my own Emma presents but her Nelson"—a sentiment Emma would quite fail to appreciate.

The long separation from the woman who was dearest to him in the world was only rendered bearable to Nelson by Emma's de-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

tailed letters. "All your letters, *my dear letters!*" he tells her, "are so entertaining! and which paint so clearly what you are after that they give me either the greatest pleasure or pain. It is the next best thing to being with you."

On his last birthday but one he wrote to her, "This day, my dearest Emma, which gave me birth, I consider as more fortunate than common days: as by my coming into this world, it has brought me so intimately acquainted with you, who my soul holds most dear. I well know that you will keep it and have my dear Horatia to drink my health. Forty-six years of toil and trouble! How few more the common lot of mankind leads us to expect: and, therefore, it is almost time to think of spending the last few years in peace and quietness."

But Nelson's last years were spent at sea in anxiety and turmoil of spirit about the French fleet which he chased to the West Indies and back. With one little interval there was no more peace for him—only a great battle, a great victory, and a glorious death. Close on two months before the date

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

of the battle of Trafalgar, he returned to Merton for the last time. There Emma greeted him and that little dark-eyed child he loved so passionately, Horatia. He snatched a few brief days to rejoice in his well-loved home, but the shadow of an unfulfilled destiny lay over him and the summons of England came soon. Nelson had little need of urging to finish his colossal task, even at the sacrifice of his happiness and his life, but it is characteristic of Emma that she claimed the part of promptress. "Did I not share in his glory?" she said after the battle. "*Even this last fatal victory, it was I bid him go forth.* Did he not pat me on the back, call me brave Emma, and said, 'If there were more Emmas there would be more Nelsons'?"

After he had set forth on his last journey Emma wrote to tell him of the doings that were dear to him, but some of these later letters he never lived to read, and one of the letters he never read contained this little story of Horatia:—

"You will be even fonder of her when you return. She says, 'I love my dear, dear God-papa, but Mrs Gibson told me he killed all

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

the people, and I was afraid.' Dearest angel she is! Oh! Nelson, how I love her, but how do I idolise you—the dearest husband of my heart, you are all in this world to your Emma. May God send you victory, and home to your *Emma, Horatia, and paradise Merton*, for when you are there it will be paradise. My own Nelson may God preserve you."

The foreboding fear of her words was answered by the event. On Nelson's desk, after he had fallen in the hour of victory, a letter to Emma was found open and unfinished, "And as my last writing before the Battle will be to you, so I hope in God that I shall live to finish my letter after the Battle," he had written. In his dying hours his last thoughts had been for her. "Pray let my dear Lady Hamilton have my hair, and all other things belonging to me." "What would become of poor Lady Hamilton, if she knew of my situation?" To Hardy he said, "Take care of my dear Lady Hamilton, Hardy. Take care of poor Lady Hamilton." And to his chaplain, Dr Scott, in a low but emphatic voice, "*Remember*, that I



HORATIA, NELSON'S DAUGHTER
BY LADY HAMILTON

Miniature by Sir J. C.

NELSON'S EMMA HAMILTON

leave Lady Hamilton and my Daughter Horatia as a legacy to my Country; never forget Horatia." His last unfinished letter was brought back to the woman he had loved and so idealised, and on the back of it she wrote in a trembling hand, "Oh, miserable, wretched Emma! Oh, glorious and happy Nelson!"

• • • • • •
Emma Hamilton lived nearly ten years after the death of Nelson—dying in the culminating year of Waterloo. It was a sorry ten years, full of extravagance, debt, difficulties, and endless petitions and memorials to public personages. In a tender little phrase she had called Nelson her "all of good," and how truly he was so is shown by the way she went to pieces after his upholding hand was gone, after the stimulus of his faith and devout admiration was withdrawn.

It is a sad spectacle, the rapid decline of Emma's fortunes, and all the sadder because it was so largely due to her own faults and weaknesses. Beauty, wealth, and friends, all gradually left her—though Nelson's favourite sister, Mrs Matcham, and other mem-

LADY HAMILTON: A STUDY

bers of his family did their best to aid and support her. But she was difficult to help, "wild and unthinking" to the last, extravagant and unreasonable to the end. Her gay and coloured House of Life, which she had reared with such ready skill upon her early obscurity, had no firm foundations, and at the end came shattering to ruin about her once lovely head. She had to fly to France to escape her pressing creditors, and there she died and was buried.

But it is not the unhappy, violent, debt-ridden woman of the last poor years who lives to memory—instead it is the radiant creature, expressive of all the joys of life, painted by Romney, a "Bacchante," an "Ariadne," or Nelson's "Guardian Angel." Out of all the vicissitudes of her extraordinary life she snatched one lasting triumph—her name spells beauty.

LORD NELSON'S LAST LETTER TO
LADY HAMILTON, WRITTEN ON THE
EVE OF THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

Victory Oct^r 19th 1805
Made Cádiz 16 Leagues.

My Dearest beloved Emma the dear
friend of my bosom the signal has
been made that the Enemies combined
fleet are coming out of Port. We
have very little Wind so that I have
no hopes of seeing them before tomorrow
May the God of Battles crown my
endeavours with success at all events,
I will take care that my name shall ever
be most dear to you and Horatia both
of whom I love as much as my own
life, and as my last writing before the
battle will be to you so I hope in God that
I shall live to furnish my letters after the

Battle, may Heaven bless you pray
your Nelson's mouth, Oct 20th in the
morning we were close to the mouth of the
Strait but the Wind had not come far
enough to the Westward to allow the combined
fleet to weather the Shoals off Port Phillip but
they were counted as far as forty Sail of ships
a War which I suppose to be 3/4 of the Line
and six frigates, a group of them was
seen off the Lighthouse off Lady this morn.
but it blows so very fresh I think weather
that I rather believe they will go into
the Harbour before night, May God
Almighty give us success over these fellows

and enable us to get a Peace

This letter was found open on
H's Desk & brought to
Lady Handley by

Capt. Handley

at midnight moved
Emma
at glorious & happy Nelson

ROMANTIC LIVES

A series of monographs, handsomely and artistically produced, of the lives of such beautiful and famous women and chivalrous men, whose careers provide to the present-day reader possibly the most fascinating stories in history. Each volume is written by a recognised authority on his subject, and contains illustrations in colour and in imitation photogravure of the best portraits and pictures relating to the period.

With many Illustrations in Colour, in Gravure-tint, and in Collotype. Crown 8vo, buckram, with mounted illustrations, **5s. net**; bound in velvet Persian and boxed, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

NELL GWYN

By CECIL CHESTERTON. With 4 Illustrations in Colour and 16 in Gravure-tint.

The story of Nell Gwyn, who won the heart of King Charles II, is presented in this volume by Mr. Chesterton in a most attractive and readable manner.

LADY HAMILTON

By E. HALLAM MOORHOUSE, Author of "Nelson's Lady Hamilton." With 4 Illustrations in Colour and 19 in Gravure-tint.

Emma Hamilton is one of the most picturesque feminine figures on the stage of history by reason of the great beauty which caused her to play such a conspicuous part in the events of Europe in her day.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

By FRANCIS BICKLEY, Author of "King's Favourites." With 4 Illustrations in Colour and 16 in Gravure-tint.

Marie Antoinette stands out as one of the tragic figures of history. How her brilliant, extravagant court and her light-hearted intrigues culminated in the storm of the French Revolution, and her tragic end on the scaffold, is a most fascinating study.

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

By HILDA T. SKAE, Author of "The Life of Mary, Queen of Scots." With 16 Illustrations in Colour and 8 Portraits in Collotype.

PRINCE CHARLIE

By WILLIAM POWER. With 16 Illustrations in Colour and 8 Portraits in Collotype.

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER, 91 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON, W.C.; 15 FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH

THE LIFE & CHARACTER SERIES

THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

By SPENCER LEIGH HUGHES, M.P., "Sub-Rosa" of the *Daily News and Leader*. With 16 Illustrations in Colour, depicting types of English Character by FREDERICK GARDNER. Extra crown 8vo, 280 pp., buckram, **5s. net**; leather, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF IRISH LIFE

By GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM, Author of "Spanish Gold," etc. With 16 Illustrations in Colour by HENRY W. KERR, R.S.A. New Edition. Extra crown 8vo, 288 pp., buckram, **5s. net**; velvet Persian, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE

By WALTER RAYMOND, Author of "The Book of Simple Delights," etc. With 16 Illustrations in Colour by WILFRED BALL, R.E. Extra crown 8vo, 462 pp., buckram, **5s. net**; velvet Persian, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

Mr. Raymond, in this book, describes English country life as it still is in the hamlets of to-day, just as a hundred years ago. His well-known touch sympathetically lights up the rustic character, its humour, and its simplicity. Mr. Wilfred Ball's illustrations are a notable feature of this interesting work, which will be one of the best gift-books of the season.

ENGLISH LIFE AND CHARACTER

By MARY E. MITFORD, Author of "Our Village." With 16 Pictures in Colour by STANHOPE A. FORBES, R.A., of typical scenes of English rural life. Extra crown 8vo, 350 pages, buckram, **5s. net**; velvet Persian, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

To every lover of old English life this will prove a most attractive presentation book. The fine colouring of the artist's famous pictures will appeal strongly to all admirers of the real charm of quiet English rural life and character.

IRISH LIFE AND CHARACTER

By Mrs. S. C. HALL. Containing 16 Reproductions in Colour from the famous paintings of ERSKINE NICOL, R.A. Extra crown 8vo, 330 pp., buckram, **5s. net**; velvet Persian, **7s. 6d. net**; vellum, **10s. 6d. net**.

The finest of Erskine Nicol's inimitable and world-famous pictures of Irish life appropriately illustrate Mrs. S. C. Hall's well-known tales, and charmingly depict the full wit and humour of the true Irish character.

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER, 91 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
LONDON, W.C.; 15 FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH

710



KR-506-496

